



# THE INDEPENDENT

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## After the IRA, Sinn Fein's London move

Parties agree on polls

Anthony Bevis  
David McKitterick and  
Jason Bennett

On a day of London chaos caused by IRA bomb scares, Sinn Fein, the terrorist group's political wing, yesterday announced that it was planning a move to Westminster. Martin McGuinness, who is the Sinn Fein candidate in Mid-Ulster and stands a good chance of winning, told BBC Radio 4's 7-day programme that his party expected to win three seats in the new Parliament.

"We are prepared to go to Westminster. We are prepared to represent our people, and I think we will be able to do that quite effectively," Mr McGuinness said. It is understood that Sinn Fein is planning to open an office in London as part of political drive to raise the party's profile at Westminster.

He said that the party was very very hopeful that there would be three MPs elected - himself, Gerry Adams in West Belfast, and Pat Doherty, in West Tyrone - with a "very strong mandate".

While that did not mean that they would take their places in the Commons - an action banned by the party constitution - he said they would be making a move to London.

Vest areas of London were gridlocked yesterday after a fresh series of IRA bomb threats closed key roadways, railway stations and airports in the South-east.

Hundreds of thousands of travellers had to endure hours of delays in the capital's worst ever traffic jam. The IRA again used the tactic of "maximum disruption, minimum risk" with a spate of early morning coded bomb warnings. Unlike Friday's attack in

The Conservatives and Labour last night accepted that the opinion polls were not accurately reflecting the real difference between the parties and said that research in yesterday's *Independent* was nearer the mark.

John Major said in Leeds: "The *Independent* interestingly enough actually chose to go out to the marginal seats, knock on a few doors and talk to people itself rather

than just rely on opinion polls." Our survey of constituencies found that contrary to the Labour lead of 14-19 points in the polls, the parties were much closer and that the Labour lead in target Tory seats was soft and could change. Senior Labour sources said last night that the findings did not unduly concern them, as their own polling suggested a lead of "more than 10 points - but less than 20".

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election '97

which two devices exploded in Leeds and Doncaster, yesterday's operation was a hoax and no bombs were found.

At the height of the morning rush hour alert Paddington, King's Cross, St Pancras, Baker Street and Charing Cross mainline and tube stations were closed and the surrounding areas evacuated.

On the M25 there was a 10-mile jam and routes into the London from the west were gridlocked.

Gatwick, part of Heathrow, Luton, and Stansted airports were also closed. There were also bomb alerts at Dover harbour and the busy M25 junction station.

The success of the IRA's disruptive tactics has raised fears that the terrorists may target polling day next week. Last night, David Veness, the Metropolitan Police's assistant commissioner with responsibility for specialist opera-

tions, revealed that anti-terrorist plans have been drawn up to try and prevent voting disruption on 1 May. He acknowledged that the general election represented a "significant security challenge", but said he was confident that it could be protected.

While declining to provide details Mr Veness said police had been planning how to combat any threat for a considerable period. He rejected suggestions that the emergency services over-reacted to yesterday's threats, stressing that they had to err on the side of caution.

Mr McGuinness said in yesterday's radio interview that there was no question of Sinn Fein MPs swearing or affirming allegiance to the Queen, a statutory requirement for all MPs wishing to sit, speak and vote in the Commons. "And we don't recognise the right of the British Government to

rule over this part of Ireland. Republican sources in Northern Ireland say that any Sinn Fein MPs can be expected to travel to London more frequently than did party president Gerry Adams during his 1983-92 spell as MP for West Belfast.

Sinn Fein has for over a decade been in the business of digging itself into the political system, and probably has more offices scattered over Northern Ireland than any of the other more conventional parties. There are also offices in various parts of the Irish Republic while in recent years others have opened in Washington and Brussels.

But the Sinn Fein constitution strictly forbids participation at Westminster, with candidates required to take the following oath: "I ... freely and solemnly declare that if elected I will not sit in, nor take part in, the proceedings of the Westminster or partitionist six-county parliaments."

This requirement could only be removed by a two-thirds vote at a Sinn Fein *and-theis* (annual conference) and there are no signs that the party is gearing up to abolish a tradition of abstentionism which extends back for decades.

Within those bounds, however, the republicans have for more than a decade adopted a more participative approach. This has seen them both contesting any and all elections and in holding meetings with almost any person or element which seeks contact with them.

According to one republican source: "It makes sense for Sinn Fein to consciously try to build relationships with parties, to win friends and be prepared to argue adn debate with anybody."

South-east chaos, page 4

Michael Catchlove (vase with flower) and Andrew Neill (table), painted by Australian artist Anthony Chiappin, combine to form the work *Sunflower* on display in Adelaide yesterday. We have no particular excuse for using this picture today. On the other hand, neither of the participants are British politicians. Photograph: Andrew Dunbar/APP

## No escape from privatisation for NHS

Jeremy Laurence  
Health Editor

Fifty years after the National Health Service was founded, hospitals are facing privatisation whichever party forms the next government, health-service managers warned yesterday.

Private companies are poised to take over the running of NHS trusts, including the provision of clinical care, as a condition of investing in the new buildings that the service urgently needs, the Institute of Health Services Management said. Although care would remain free to patients it would be delivered by doctors and nurses employed by private companies.

Fears that NHS hospitals

would be privatised have been raised ever since the introduction of the NHS internal market in 1991 - and constantly denied. Now managers say it is inevitable because of cuts in public funding for new hospitals - amounting to 22 per cent between 1994-99 - to which both main parties are committed.

A report commissioned by the Institute of Health Services Management Consultancy, said efforts to replace the lost funds with private investment under the Government's Private Finance Initiative have failed because private investors fear the risks outweigh the potential rewards.

Under the scheme, launched in 1992, private companies design and build new hospitals and

manage support services such as maintenance and cleaning. The buildings are leased to the NHS which runs the clinical services. More than 50 schemes have been agreed in principle - the largest being a new £170m hospital in Norwich - and more than 150 are in negotiation but none has been given the final go-ahead.

The report says that NHS managers remain unconvinced that the scheme can be made to work. It says NHS trusts are demanding "unaffordable" prices in new buildings, and health authorities are failing to make proper estimates of future demand. There are also worries about the legality of the scheme.

A second report by re-

searchers at St George's Hospital Medical School says that hospital trusts are cutting back on the number of beds included in new schemes to make them more affordable which will lead to a "shrunk NHS". The report, to be published in the British Medical Journal this week says patient throughput would have to increase to unrealistic levels to cope with the reduction in beds.

Karen Caines, director of the institute, said: "Both Labour and the Tories are saying they are looking to increase private investment in the NHS. If so, given the dismal performance of the private finance initiative so far, they will have to look at how they can improve it."

Ms Caines said the scheme's track record in the NHS had been one of "delay, bureaucracy, and immense frustration". It was launched without proper thought about the process, and few people understood the implications, she said. "If private finance is to be the way forward then the new government in May needs to act urgently ... to make the system work."

Professor Chris Ham, head of the Institute of Health Services Management at the University of Birmingham, said there was an "inevitable logic" behind the private-finance initiative. "Investors who put their finance at risk will want to have a big say in how the hospitals are run. That will mean a seat on

the board ... and a say in the appointment of consultants. If they are not performing successfully the investors will be bound to step in to change the management or the doctors. The end of the route will be increasing privatisation."

Michael Foot, the former Labour leader and biographer of Aneurin Bevan, said the founder of the NHS would be turning in his grave. "It is the thin end of the wedge. Bevan fought on many fronts at the same time against people who said his plan for the NHS was the wrong way to do it, and that if it took on too much it wouldn't work. But it wasn't true. There are better ways of saving money, through preventive medicine."

## Five minute 20 second break pots £165,000

Guy Hodgson

Mike Tyson has collected money in the boxing ring and even Britain's horizontal heavyweight Frank Bruno has picked up hundreds of thousands of pounds for a few moments. But Ronnie O'Sullivan yesterday entered snooker history with the fastest 147 maximum in tournament play. With it, he earned £165,000.

O'Sullivan's maximum - 15 reds, 15 blacks and the six colours in one visit to the table - took just 5 minutes 20 seconds, and with a £147,000 bonus for a maximum and £18,000 for the

highest break during the Embassy World Championships, works out at £515 a second. In comparison, the £210,000 on offer to the eventual winner at the Crucible, Sheffield, for 17 days' work is chicken-feed.

The frame, the 14th in his 10-6 win over Mick Price, put O'Sullivan through to the second round and a step nearer a potential quarter-final against Stephen Hendry who also is hoping to create a landmark of his own by becoming the first man to win the modern world championship seven times.

"It was unbelievable to do this in the world champi-

onships," O'Sullivan, who is ranked eighth in the world, said. "I haven't had a maximum in ages, even in practice, so to get it at the Crucible is fantastic. There is only one venue as far as snooker is concerned."

"You could add, and his supporters probably will do, that there is only one Ronnie O'Sullivan. The 21-year-old from Chigwell, Essex, compiled his first 100 break at the age of 10 and immediately broke Hendry's record of 36 consecutive victories after turning professional in 1992. He has frequently found the fame that comes with such exploits hard

to handle, however, and at last year's world championships he assaulted a press officer for which he was fined £20,000 and ordered to make a "voluntary" donation of £10,000 to charity. He was also given a two-year ban, suspended for two years conditional on his good conduct.

O'Sullivan becomes only the fourth man to record a maximum in the world championships, following Cliff Thorburn in 1983, Jimmy White in 1992 and Stephen Hendry in 1995. It is the 20th official 147 compiled in a major tournament.

Winning potential, page 28



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# TOM SHARPE

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## significant shorts

**£2m for cancer patients after radiotherapy blunder**

A £2m settlement has been agreed with almost 100 victims of a hospital blunder that resulted in cancer patients receiving the wrong doses of radiation. It was announced yesterday.

More than 1,000 patients at the North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary in Stoke-on-Trent received incorrect treatment after a machine was set up wrongly for nine years.

Lawyers for 95 of the victims and their relatives announced yesterday that their five-year battle for compensation had ended with the agreement for £2m, plus "substantial" costs. The patients were given lower-than-prescribed doses of radiation after a computer miscalculated the amounts they should receive.

After the blunder came to light in 1992 the hospital admitted there had been a fault but had disputed whether it had caused harm. A report later said that out of 1,075 patients who had received wrong doses, more than 400 had since died and another 91 had suffered a recurrence of their cancers. It also said it was virtually impossible to say whether those who had died would have survived if it had not been for the mistake.

James Evans, chairman of the group of solicitors who fought the case, said survivors and relatives of some patients who had died would be told over the next few days exactly how much compensation they would receive. But he added: "No financial compensation can be adequate for the trauma they suffered."

**Blackout in southern Scotland**

Thousands of homes and businesses in southern Scotland were without electricity yesterday after a leaking pipe disrupted supplies.

Around 10,000 customers were cut off at around 7.30am in and around Kirkcudbright and Castle Douglas, Scottish Power said. The disruption was caused by a leaking pipe which flooded the Tondland sub-station in Dumfries and Galloway. Twenty schools in the area were closed for the day and social services such as meals-on-wheels were delayed. Scottish Power engineers managed to provide alternative power supplies for 7,000 customers. A spokesman for the power company said yesterday it was not known when the remaining 4,000 customers still without electricity would be switched back on.

**Tracie Andrews pleads 'not guilty'**

Tracie Andrews, the woman accused of the roadside murder of her fiancé Lee Harvey, appeared in court yesterday to formally enter a not-guilty plea.

Ms Andrews, 27, spoke only twice during the 20 minute hearing at Birmingham Crown Court to confirm her name and answer "not guilty" when asked how she pleaded to the charge that she murdered her boyfriend on 10 December last year. Mr Harvey, 25, was found stabbed to death by the side of a country lane at Coopers Hill in Alvechurch, Worcestershire. Ms Andrews' bail, with strict conditions, was renewed and the case was adjourned for trial - probably later this year.

**Woman-hating rapist jailed**

A man who hated women, and who had a "game plan" to murder four females, was sent indefinitely to Rampton high-security psychiatric hospital yesterday following a series of frenzied attacks.

Rodney Barnes targeted and stalked women on their own to terrorise, rob or sexually attack them. Police discovered he also had a list of 30 high-profile potential victims. Barnes was described by one psychiatrist as "probably the most dangerous man I have seen in my professional career". He told police he wanted "to see out my game plan" - the murder of four female relations, including his mother and former wife. Barnes, 34, from South London, admitted a rape, an indecent assault, seven robberies, an attempted robbery and a theft in six weeks, starting on 5 March last year.

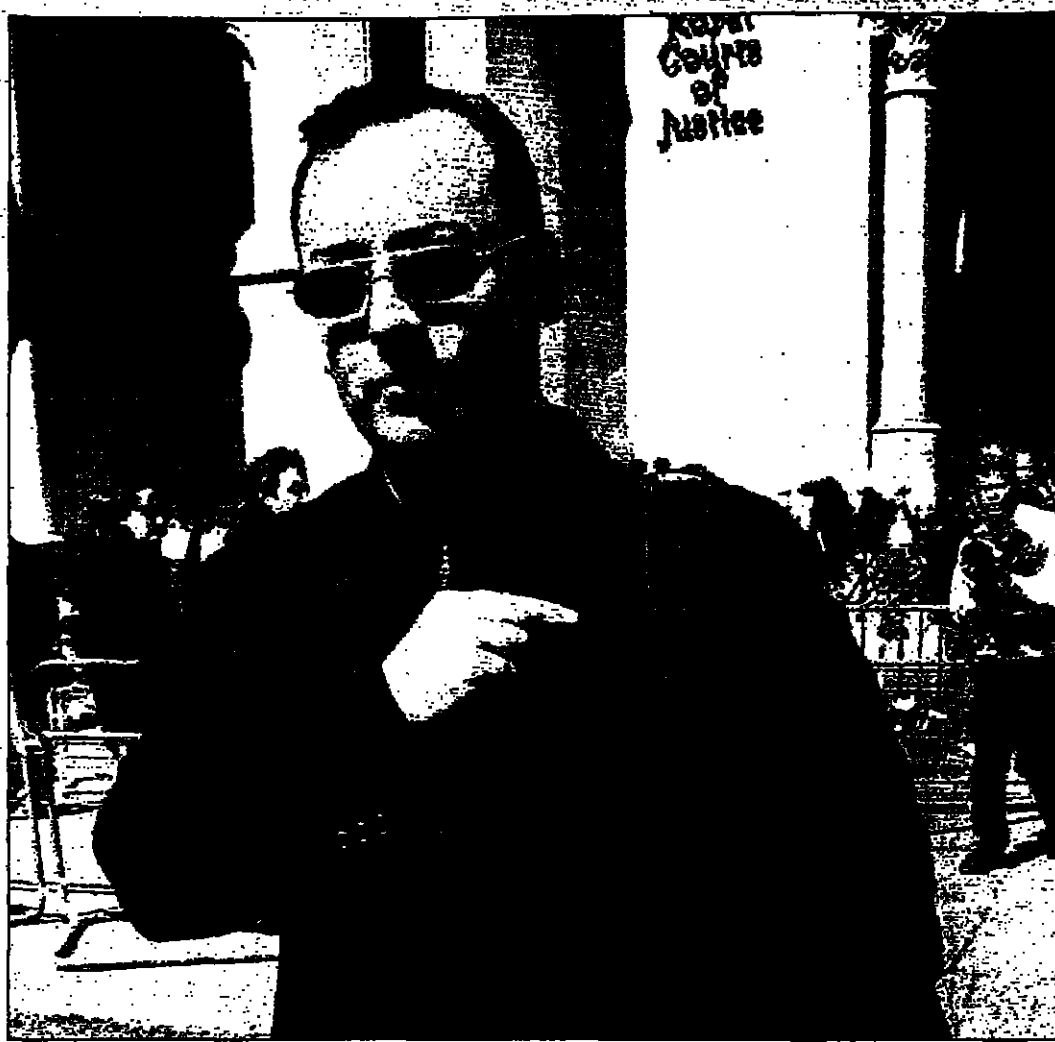
**More strikes for firefighters**

The dispute between fire officers and Essex County Council has worsened after the Fire Brigades Union announced two further strikes, despite warnings that any further industrial action will lead to the suspension of all crews. After a 24-hour strike on Saturday by Essex fire officers, army Green Goddess fire-engines and their military crews were again put on standby yesterday during a four-hour stoppage. The FBUs say members will stage a 24-hour walkout on 29 April followed by a nine-hour stoppage on 3 May. The union are protesting at £1.5m in spending cuts which, they say, will cost at least 52 officers their jobs and put the public at risk. Simon Reeve

**Relief at end of loo-roll battle**

Andrexx left the High Court much relieved yesterday as the three-day battle of the loo rolls came to a close. Mr Justice Laddie flushed Nouvelle Quilted's latest promotional pack down the pan on the grounds that it could be mistaken for an Andrexx product. In what the judge described as a "difficult" case of "passing-off", Kimberly-Clark was granted an injunction banning Fort Sterling, manufacturers of Nouvelle, from using the Andrexx trade mark without adequately distinguishing the two products. Clare Garner

## people



Boy George: His claims of a relationship are false, says Kirk Brandon (Photograph: PA)

**Musician takes Boy George to court over gay allegation**

Boy George, the former star of the pop group Culture Club, became "obsessed" with a male musician and tried to "out" him as a homosexual after inventing a relationship between the two men, the High Court was told yesterday.

Kirk Brandon, best remembered for his time with the "Goth-rock" groups Spear of Destiny and Theatre of Hate, is suing George, now a highly successful DJ, for malicious falsehood.

The legal action relates to claims of a relationship between the two men in George's 1995 autobiography *Take It Like A Man* and a CD called *Cherry Lips and Beauty*, which contains a song about Brandon, titled "Unfinished Business".

Boy George states in his book "Sleeping with Kirk wasn't sex, it was absolute love." But Brandon told the court that George developed a crush on him, and that he eventually became an obsession. He said he was not gay, never had an affair with George, and that the allegations were "a complete lie".

**Anger at Charles' snub to academy for inventors**

Trevor Baylis (right), award-winning inventor of the clockwork radio, has vented his frustration on behalf of Britain's unsung inventors, after Prince Charles turned down a request to be patron of a Royal Academy of Inventors.

Despite nearly two years' lobbying, Mr Baylis has failed to find any funding - including lottery money - to support his dream. His attempt to enlist the Prince, whom he met last July at Buckingham Palace, was refused on the basis that he is already patron to 400 organisations, and has to turn down the majority of requests.

"You can get lottery money for the arts - they say it's our culture. But people have to realise that invention is part of British culture too - it goes back to the Industrial Revolution, which produced so many ideas. Yet inventors never get support from government," he said.

A Royal Academy of Inventors would cost about £2.5m annually for the first three years, he reckons, after which it could be self-financing. The aim would be to offer advice and funding to people who come to it with ideas.

"We're trying to give credit to people with ideas, who presently



are portrayed as fools and jackasses - whereas there's government money for people who put dead sheep in formaldehyde or makes piles of bricks, as long as they call it 'art'. We want to start a renaissance of invention."

Mr Baylis developed a wind-up radio which does not need batteries, for the African market. His company, Baygen, now manufactures 20,000 radios daily and is opening two new factories. But it was only after he allowed the idea to be shown on the BBC TV programme, *Tomorrow's World*, that he could get financial backing.

Charles Arthur

**Billionaire's gift to Cambridge**

The billionaire who made his money in milk and fruit juice cartons is pouring £2.5m into a new mathematics centre at Cambridge University.

The donation, by Swedish-born Hans Rausing, co-founder of the packaging firm TetraPak, will fund around one tenth of the project, the university said yesterday.

Mr Rausing, 71, Britain's second richest man, after being knocked from the pinnacle of the wealth league this year, was reportedly inspired to make the gift by an enthusiasm for cosmology and the work of Cambridge professor Stephen Hawking.

Cambridge owes a debt of gratitude to punitive Swedish tax laws, which prompted Mr Rausing to leave his home country in the 1980s and settle in Britain.

He and his brother, Gad, became richer than the Queen in 1995 thanks to their carton - an invention inspired by their grandmother's sausage-making, in which meat was squeezed into a skin and pinched at both ends.

Since selling his stake in the Swiss-based packaging group Tetra Laval last year for almost £3bn, he has retired to his West Sussex home, set in a deer park, and indulged his passion for vintage cars.

Lucy Ward

## briefing

## NHS

**Young doctors alienated by clipboard culture**

Young doctors are alienated from the managerial culture of the NHS and only their commitment to their patients is preventing them from leaving medicine, according to a study.

Growing pressure from managers with clipboards who treat them as "technical monkeys" and demand increased work rates is eroding their ability to provide caring, compassionate medicine, the report from the British Medical Association says.

The study, based on detailed interviews with small groups of doctors aged under 40 around the country, found the growing need for doctors to measure and account for their clinical actions meant they felt less in control and undermined their sense of vocation.

Isobel Allen, of the Policy Studies Institute and author of the report said: "Many were resisting what they saw as a managerial takeover which threatened their values and practice."

She added that doctors did not see themselves as "god-like figures" but equally did not want to be treated by their patients as "proprietors of a pizza parlour to be called up at any time of the day and night".

Jeremy Laurence

## MOTORING

**Stressed out behind the wheel**

More than one in three drivers suffer from stress and muscular aches and pains after stints behind the wheel. Women are more likely to suffer stress than men and drivers between 35 and 44 get most anxious when motoring than other age groups, a survey has found.

But nearly half of drivers do not bother to adjust their seat, check their posture or even check their mirrors before moving off, the research, by motor insurance company Direct Line, found.

And nearly three in five drivers do not even bother to make sure they have enough petrol before starting out.



## TRAVEL

**Eurostar puts squeeze on airlines**

The high-speed Channel Tunnel Eurostar train service is having a big impact on UK-France air services, official figures showed yesterday. The success of Eurostar's London to Paris service meant airline passenger numbers between the two capitals fell 12 per cent in 1996, the Civil Aviation Authority said.

In comparison with 1994 - before Eurostar operations - the number of air passengers between London and Paris has fallen by 1 million, said the CAA.

But Eurostar's London-Brussels service has not hit airlines so hard, with only 50,000 fewer people travelling between the two cities in 1996 compared with 1994, the CAA statistics showed.

The association's figures also revealed the UK's airports handled 136 million passengers last year - a 5 per cent rise on 1995.

## HEALTH

**Community care on the brink**

Mental health services are close to breaking point in some parts of Britain as the community care system teeters on the brink of collapse, psychiatrists warned yesterday. In a hard-hitting report, the Royal College of Psychiatrists said the cause of the crisis was a fundamental failure in the development and implementation of "health policies".

The problems were not confined to the immediate difficulties posed by high bed occupancy rates in urban areas.

The college called on the Government to ensure mental illness received the same priority in the NHS as physical illness, to put a hold on further hospital closures, to bring together social and health services and tackle staff shortages.

## ASTRONOMY

**Third tail spotted on Hale-Bopp**

On a clear evening, Comet Hale-Bopp appears to have two tails - but European astronomers have now discovered that it has a third, consisting of sodium atoms. The discovery could lead to new theories about the composition of comets and the effects of the sun on them.

The most visible tail of any comet consists of dust particles thrown off as the rock and ice forming the nucleus heats up during the approach to the sun. Another, subsidiary tail is also produced, consisting of charged ions of elements from the nucleus. This is thrown off and away by the "solar wind" of plasma emitted from the solar surface. The sodium tail, the first to be discovered, is emitted in a direction close to but slightly different from the second, "ion" tail. More unusually, the sodium is in the form of uncharged atoms, not ions.

Charles Arthur

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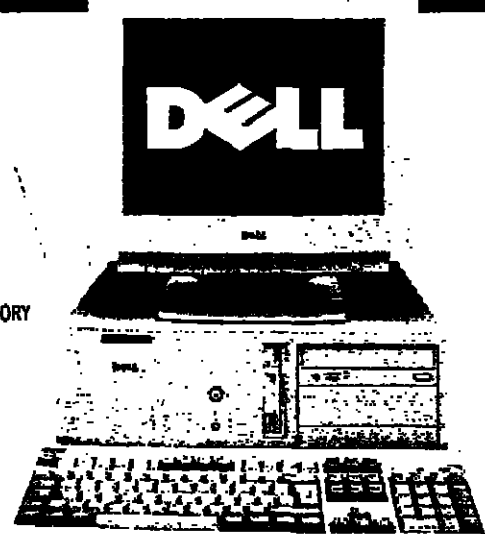
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# Scratch cards gamble on a relaunch

Michael Streeter

Lottery organiser Camelot yesterday confirmed a plan effectively to relaunch its scratch cards, after a fall in sales, and possibly to offer participants a chance to take part in a television game show.

Sales of the cards, which began after the successful launch of the Saturday draw, have slumped from a peak of more

than £44m to a low of £15m in the first week of this month.

Although details have still to be hammered out, the campaign will probably introduce a variety of innovative games to attract new punters, and also give players the opportunity to compete for prizes in a televised show.

A clue to the new approach is shown by the success of Camelot's Pigs Might Fly

scratchcard, started last summer, which offered relatively low prizes of £10,000 but which gave a higher than normal chance of winning - one in four as against one in five.

Lower prizes but with a higher chance of success, involving "humorous" formats, are seen as the way forward. Christmas bonus cards have also proved popular.

A spokesman for Camelot

yesterday confirmed it was considering new ideas for scratch cards but was cautious about committing itself to specific ideas. He said: "We are always looking at new and innovative marketing initiatives for both the National Lottery game and Instant. We will continue to consider new game ideas with more variety to broaden appeal."

He added: "The Instant brand still outsells the top three

impulse brands in the country - Coca Cola, Walkers and KitKat - and 10 million people play regularly each week."

The company points out that in other countries such as the US, instant games have slumped after launches, before recovering to gain a larger slice of the market.

If a new television show is launched, it is likely to be offered to the BBC which has a

contract to show the lottery draws until this autumn. Cards would have a separate panel to be scratched which would give the purchaser the chance to appear in the programme and win a variety of prizes.

Camelot claims that its advertising and marketing for scratchcards has produced a "halo effect" for the sector as a whole - boosting sales from £43m to £100m a year. Around

half of the UK population are thought to play instant at some time, with one in ten playing on a weekly basis.

Company sources said the fall in sales was not a "disaster" but that it needed to maintain or increase them so that, overall, commercial targets could be reached.

One said: "We did predict the market would drop but we did not want it to fall any lower."

The fall in sales can be traced back to early last year when the main lottery game offered its first double-rollover jackpot. Other scratchcard operators are thought to have seen similar falls in sales.

Another option is for Camelot to eschew altogether one-off prizes and instead offer regular monthly payments, as is done already in other parts of Europe.

## Children get a kick out of greens with wacky veg

Glenda Cooper

Consumer Affairs Correspondent

"Urrgh, it's sort of squishy," wailed Rosa, 9, "I don't like it." As she gingerly picked up a spoonful of chocolate-flavoured carrots, her classmates took up the chant: "Eat, eat, eat, eat."

To her right, Mohammed was shovelling down cheese-and-onion flavoured cauliflower, declaring it as "good as my mum's", while Liam looked as if he would be sick.

With Britain's children turning their noses up at vital fruit and vegetables, health experts and retailers are joining forces to try to lure them back to loving greens.

Supermarkets such as Sainsbury's have launched "kid-sized" fruit and vegetable packs and yesterday Iceland unveiled their "wacky veg" range, consisting of chocolate-flavoured carrots, pizza-flavoured sweetcorn, baked-bean-flavoured peas and cheese-and-onion flavoured cauliflower.

They expect to sell £500,000 worth of the 99p packets in the next three weeks.

Of 300,000 people who develop cancer every year in the UK, around a third are diet related and potentially pre-

ventable. "There is a clear link between a diet high in vegetables and cancer prevention, yet recent research highlighted that mums are losing the battle to get their kids to eat vegetables," said Professor Gordon McVie, director general of the Cancer Research Campaign.

He said that attempts to persuade children to eat their greens through health education had all failed and a radical approach was needed.

"I think it is a serious attempt to do something helpful," he said, "I don't think it's frivolous."

A survey by Spathclyde University earlier this year found that Christmas dinner was the only meal when most British children get an adequate intake of vegetables.

The researchers found that many mothers had given up forcing the issue of vegetable consumption because they disliked the stress.

At Gillespie Primary School, Year Four (eight- and nine-year-olds) named their least favourite vegetables as Brussels sprouts and peas, while their favourite, surprisingly, was broccoli.

Presented with the wacky veg they were intrigued but not always won over. Liam,



Taste police: Nine-year-old Rosa Hardt, a self-declared enemy of all things squishy, tries some chocolate-flavoured carrots (below)

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

aged nine, who said he didn't like any vegetables, managed a small mouthful before declaring them all "disgusting".

"I don't like the peas. They're nasty. They're awful. The sweetcorn is alright but I don't like the rest. I hate all vegetables," he said.

Rosa, next to him, was equally suitably. "The carrots are slimy and they taste of toffee not chocolate," she said. "I don't like squishy things."

But those who had only expressed a mild dislike of veg were won over. "They are nicer

than usual," said Shaahra. "They are sweeter."

Mohammed and Ben had polished off the cauliflower and peas and wanted second helpings. "I love cauliflower. I reckon I eat vegetables once or twice a week at home. For lunch I think I would have bread, crisps and chocolate," said Mohammed. "It looks horrible but it tastes nice," said Mandy, stirring the carrots in their brown sauce.

"Yum, they're nicer than normal carrots," added George. For parents who balk at

flavoured vegetables [he relieved: bubblegum broccoli was one of the ideas which was rejected] kid-friendly snack packs of mini-carrots, cherry tomatoes and individually wrapped apples and pears could be more appealing.

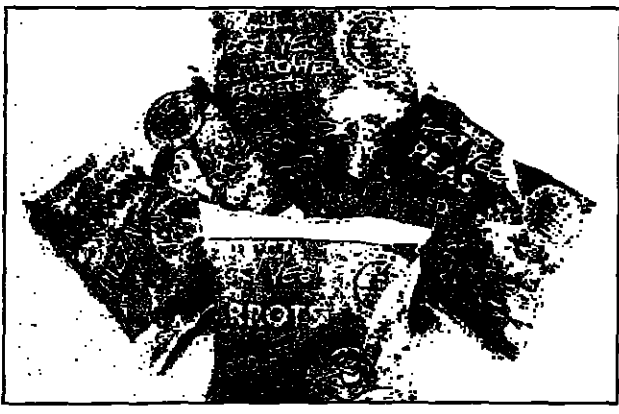
The major problem was that few of the children could open the sturdy plastic covering.

Those who liked vegetables preferred the raw carrots to the chocolate variety, crunching them with enthusiasm, but those who did not want to eat veg in the first place hated the

raw ones. "Yuk, it's horrible," said George, nine, pulling an unholy grimace as he tasted a carrot. "Urrgh, can I put it in the bin, miss?" said Liam after one taste of a cherry tomato.

Leaving the classroom, the children were asked what kind of chocolate bars they liked.

Twix, Galaxy, Mars, Lion bars - the names came rushing out. And what kind of fruit? Apples, oranges, grapes - then the names dried up. "I don't like apples, I'd rather have sweets," said Mehmet, summing up the views of many.



## Is Selina Scott really worth £1m a year?

Paul McCann

Media Correspondent

Sky Television seems to have finally asked the question that has vexed many people for a long time: why is Selina Scott paid so much?

The satellite television channel has confirmed it is pulling her late-night celebrity chat show, *The Selina Scott Show*, off air just six weeks after it launched. The programme will be back on air in July with a new format and will be given an earlier start time in an effort to kick-start the show's flagging ratings.

One tabloid newspaper reported that one of her shows, broadcast on 17 March, had an audience of just 6,000 viewers.

Ms Scott was hired last November by the Rupert Murdoch-owned station amid fanfare and reports in the Murdoch-owned press that she was to be paid £1m for the show.

It was yet another in a long line of allegedly well-paid but low-profile television presenting jobs that Ms Scott has taken in a frenetic career.

She became a national celebrity in 1981 when she was appointed a news reader on *News at Ten*, at a time when viewers were still more used to *gratuitous* than glamour.

Two years later, she moved to host the BBC's *Breakfast Time* programme with Frank Bough and has continued ever since to move around for seemingly ever-increasing amounts of money, with-

out anyone being able to say exactly why.

In the mid-Eighties her pay took off when she moved to the United States to host an entertainment gossip show for CBS for a reported \$1m (£625,000) salary. Since then her every job change - from the *Clothes Show* on the BBC to increasingly obscure satellite channels - has been accompanied by reports that she was being paid salaries of £100,000 or £200,000.

A talk-show on satellite station NBC Superchannel lasted just a year until 1996, then a meeting with Sam Chisholm, Sky's hard-man chief executive, brought the latest chat show.

For all the money she is reported to make, indeed perhaps because of it, Ms Scott has been dogged by suggestions that she is all looks and no substance. Her low-brow reputation was set in 1983 when live on television she famously asked Fay Weldon, the chair of the Booker Prize jury, if she had actually read all the books being judged. A moment the BBC cruelly included in its *TV Hell* programme in 1992.

Her image was not helped by a fawning interview she conducted with the American property millionaire, Donald Trump, which prompted him later to write a letter describing her as "ingratiating" and "insecure". Stung by a painful profile in 1992, Ms Scott tried to defend herself by writing an article for the *Times*

newspaper. She denied earning £300,000 a year from two shows, but rather blew her chance of public sympathy by comparing herself with "many other single working women", and pleading: "I have absolutely no job security... If I am ill I am not paid. I have no company pension and no company car."

In view of this week's news from Sky her 1992 article may also have created a hostage to fortune. "The only real test of talent in television, as in the theatre, is the ability to put bums on seats. Broadcasting organisations are not uniformly stupid. Cilla Black is ITV's highest paid star because she delivers a huge audience." Something which Ms Scott no longer seems to do.



Selina Scott: Show taken off air

### What chat show hosts earn

The richest chat show host in the world is also the most imitated. David Letterman cut himself a \$14m deal with CBS when he moved from the NBC network.

The best-paid presenter on British TV is Cilla Black, whose *Blind Date* is in its 13th year for ITV and is indispensable to their schedule. She is estimated to make £3.5m out of her present two-year contract.

ITV has also made millionaires of Richard Madeley and Judy Finnegan, who were reported to make £1.5m for the daytime show *This Morning* and the occasional evening interview.

On the BBC, until Michael Parkinson returns, the best-paid tend to be newcomers. Ruby Wax is reported to be on £500,000, while Frank Skinner gets £300,000 for his show.

Old stagers Terry Wogan and Esther Rantzen struggle by on a paltry £200,000 and £350,000 respectively.

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# IRA brings London to a standstill

Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

It was a day of disruption for millions of commuters in the capital. A meticulously worked out and clearly executed terrorist plan to create confusion brought London's transport system to a virtual standstill yesterday.

Travellers found roads clogged, stations closed and aircraft grounded by bomb threats which targeted major transport hubs in the south-east of England.

The warnings, assumed to have been made by the IRA, were timed to cause maximum chaos in the morning rush hour. At one point the Royal Automobile Club described conditions on the roads as "some of the worst for many years, if ever".

At the height of the alert Paddington, King's Cross, St Pancras, Baker Street and Charing Cross mainline and Tube stations were closed and the surrounding roads and buildings evacuated.

According to the RAC, London was a patchwork of areas either packed solid with stranded pedestrians and jammed traffic or cordoned off and eerily silent. Trafalgar Square was empty at one stage after police sealed it off.

On the M25 there was a 10-mile traffic jam and routes into the London from the west were gridlocked. The disruption was at its peak at 9am.

"You have 250,000 vehicles crossing the inner London cordon during the peak rush hour," Martin Mogeridge, a transport consultant, said. "If you targeted, say, four key points particularly in the morning rush hour where drivers have no choice but to carry on into London - then it is relatively easy to bring the roads to a halt."

The first bomb threats - using recognised code words - were received by local shops and hospitals in the centre of London at 6.45am. The earliest targets were the capital's main rail terminal.

At 6.49am King's Cross, London's lifeline to the north, was closed. Two minutes later, Charing Cross, serving south London and Kent, was also closed. At 6.53, Paddington was shut down. Surrounding streets were evacuated and buses on routes using central London streets were all diverted.

Air transport was the next to

be targeted. Luton, 30 miles north of the capital, was the first of the airports to receive a bomb threat at 6.52am. It was also the last to be back in action, reopening at 3pm with flights resuming more than an hour later. Two suspect packages were found during the search - a wooden box which was exploded by Army bomb disposal experts in a controlled situation, and a package which proved to be harmless.

St Pancras and Baker Street, vital commuter links, were closed at 7am. By then the terrorists had switched targets, focusing on sea-faring passengers. At 7.21am, Kent police received a bomb threat to Dover docks. The harbour area was closed for 40 minutes for a search to be carried out, but again nothing was found.

Gatwick in West Sussex, the country's second busiest airport, was closed at 7.40am. More than 4,000 passengers were stranded in aircraft until the emergency was over and British Airways passenger jets circling the skies above the city had to be diverted to airports as far afield as Southampton, Bournemouth and even to Royal Air Force bases in Kent.

It was more than six hours before both terminals at Gatwick reopened, and then it was with only a patchy schedule. British Airways did not restart flights from the airport until the early evening yesterday. There were also closures at Stansted, in Essex, and Heathrow - where a suspect package was blown up by police at 9am.

The tense atmosphere led to many false alarms. London Underground's Jubilee line was closed for more than 20 minutes, reopening just before 9am after a suspect package on a platform at St John's Wood in north-west London had been checked.

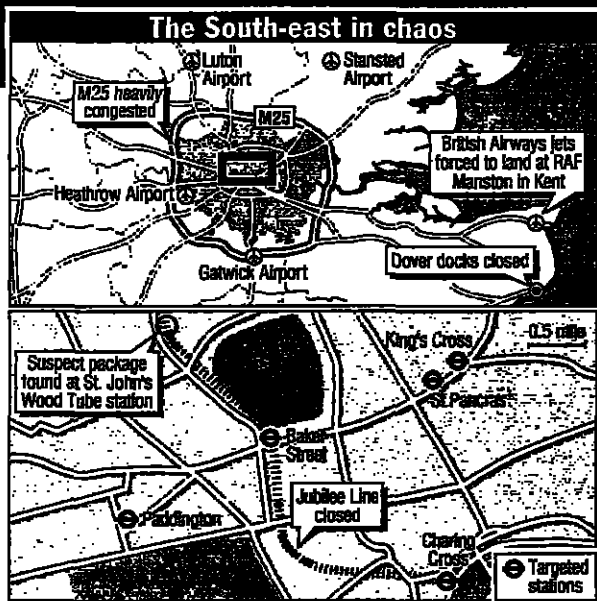
Rail stations outside London did not escape. A coded telephone warning covering the three mainline rail stations in Watford in Hertfordshire, was received at 7am. Watford Junction, a busy commuter stop, was closed at 8.40am. Police carried out a controlled explosion just north of the station, and it was reopened soon after 1pm.

It was afternoon before the capital's rail network resumed, normal services with Paddington the last of the central mainline and Underground stations to reopen at just before noon.



Out of bounds: Trafalgar Square standing eerily quiet as London was put on alert yesterday

Photograph: Reuters



## Nation defenceless against terrorist disruption tactics

Jason Bennett  
and David McKittrick

The police and security services are "virtually defenceless" against the IRA's current tactic of using bomb threats to disrupt the transport network, terrorism experts believe.

At its most simple the strategy, which is intended to produce chaos and disruption with little risk of loss of life, can involve one terrorist telephoning a number of targets from anywhere in the world.

The IRA know that as long as the calls include a known codeword, the emergency authorities are certain to respond.

As Dr Michael Page, of Bradford University's Department of Peace Studies, explained: "It's very difficult to protect transport infrastructure. You cannot have every signal box and motorway

bridge manned or monitored. The system is virtually indefensible.

"We are a free, open, democratic country, so we don't have vast numbers of police that can be positioned everywhere - it's virtually impossible to deal with this."

However, the terrorist tactics do have weaknesses that can be exploited. To ensure their actions obtain maximum publicity and to maintain credibility, the terrorists need to plant some bombs, such as the device that went off in Leeds last Friday. It is while they are being placed or during reconnaissance that they risk being identified.

The use of closed circuit television cameras and enhanced public awareness of suspicious behaviour are considered by the police as two of the most important anti-ter-

rorism tools available. But probably more important is the role of the intelligence services, particularly MI5 and Scotland Yard's Anti Terrorist Branch. IRA members are unlikely to be caught in the act of making a bomb threat, but via careful surveillance and the use of informants, active service units can be tracked down.

Dr Page believes the IRA might want to change tactics and target different forms of transport such as bridges or tunnels. He also speculated that it might want another "spectacular" hit similar to last year's Docklands bomb, although this is more likely to result in death, which would seriously damage Sinn Féin's hopes of entering talks with the new government.

He said: "The IRA likes to change its tactics and to be unpredictable."

David Veness, the Metropolitan Police's assistant commissioner with responsibility for specialist operations, emphasised that "the security assumption has got to be that there's a threat to human life". Evacuation was not automatic, he said, but employed only after sophisticated assessment of the threat.

Dr Richard Clutterbuck, lecturer in security at Exeter University, said people were ready to take a greater degree of responsibility for their own safety, adding: "I would like to see the police tell us the dangers and let us decide on whether we want to take the risk or not..."

Traffic disruption such as that caused by the IRA in England yesterday was once commonplace in the early 1990s in Belfast, but has not been seen on a large scale in recent years.

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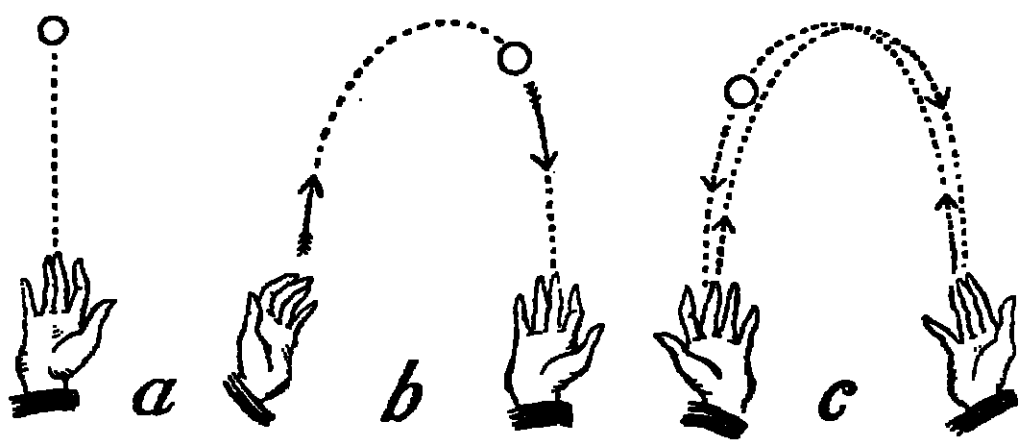


Fig. 6. The principles of Ball Juggling.

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# Parents launch fight to claim school places

Lucy Ward  
Education Correspondent

Parents of children denied places at popular local schools while other families cheat to gain offers are uniting in admissions blackspots to expose what they claim is the "myth of parental choice".

Amid evidence that in some authorities, hundreds of 10- and 11-year-olds have still not been allocated places for September, some parents are pledging to keep their children at home rather than accept offers from distant or low-performing schools.

The anger of new campaign groups being formed to fight for changes to admissions is directed at schools and local authorities but also at parents who use devious means to snatch places in over-subscribed schools.

The Independent revealed last week how councils and individual schools were being forced to clamp down to catch out families giving bogus addresses within key catchment areas or falsely claiming religious beliefs to gain admission to church schools.

Parents whose children have been squeezed out want new legislation to overturn the so-called Greenwich Judgement which obliged local authorities to accept children from outside their boundaries into their schools.

Two of the most outspoken campaign groups were launched last month in Hertfordshire, where around 180 children have no offer of a place for next year. Campaigners claim children from as far away as north London and neighbouring counties have been allocated places while their own children face journeys to school of up to 10 miles.

The situation has arisen partly because Hertfordshire schools give priority to parents in any area who can make a case for a school's suitability for their child before considering applications based on proximity.

Michael Waller, of the Watford and South Herts Parents Group, said: "I and my fellow parents have no problem with schools attracting pupils from outside of the area to improve the standard of education available to all but that should not happen at the expense of local families."

A Hertfordshire County Council spokesman said the authority had done all it could to accommodate parents' wishes and had squeezed 30 extra places into its schools.

A pressure group founded last week in Wandsworth, south London, includes families who live less than 500 yards from their local secondary school yet have no right to a place.

All but three schools in the Conservative-run borough are

grant maintained and every school is either selective or specialist, with three secondaries selecting half of their pupils purely on ability regardless of where they live.

Karen Longthorn, founder of the Local Education Campaign said: "Parental choice is a myth in Wandsworth. It is only the academic elite or children of parents who can afford coaching for school entrance tests."

A Wandsworth spokesman said the authority had deliberately encouraged a range of schools in place of neighbourhood comprehensives. Those children without offers would have places by September as parents holding more than one place made their final choice.



Sharon Allen waits at home with her daughter Danielle knowing that she could have cheated to win a place at their chosen secondary school, writes Lucy Ward.

Sharon and her husband Des, both property developers, own two houses just yards from St

Albans' Girls Grammar School, but missed out because they used their true home address - three miles away - to apply to Hertfordshire County Council. With just four months to a new school year, Danielle, 11, is among 44 children in the St Albans area still with no offer of a

secondary school place. Now the Allens, and fellow members of a local pressure group, Parents Charter 1997, are threatening to educate their children at home unless a suitable choice is forthcoming.

Photograph: Edward Sykes

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## DAILY POEM

### Scream

By Rupert M Loydell

I urge the bookshelf  
to surprise me, starting  
through familiar spines.  
Taking down friends I've not  
met for a while, I pass over  
names I've ignored before.

You mention strangers  
I should meet, as jets  
wing the sky overhead.  
Their song interrupts  
the words' music,  
poems float by unseen...

The river is swallowing  
fields, mud settles or is  
torn from the bank. Above,  
the air screams in pain.  
In the swollen current  
everything is unclear.

Today's selection from the Sacred Land Project anthology, *Earth Ascending* (Stride, £9.50), is by Stride Publications' editor. Sacred Land will be launched tomorrow in England with a ceremony at St Mary's Church, Willesden, north-west London.

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## news

# 'Oppression and deceit' that won police the Bridgewater murder confession

On first day of full appeal, QC tells how crime squad put pressure on suspect with a falsified statement

Patricia Wynn Davies  
Legal Affairs Correspondent

Police officers at the centre of the Carl Bridgewater murder investigation combined a carefully contrived device of deceit with oppression to extract the confession that led to the jailing of the four accused, the Court of Appeal was told yesterday.

Michael Mansfield QC, counsel for the late Patrick Molloy, said the attitude of the officers was such that when confronted with evidence of a falsified statement one, Detective Sergeant John Robbins, volunteered to "personally pull the handle on these men and open the trap-door and hang them, and he would do it with a bacon sandwich in his hand."

The accusations came at the start of the full appeal on behalf of the Bridgewater Four against their 1979 convictions for the murder of the 13-year-old newspaper boy at Yew Tree Farm, near Stourbridge, West Midlands.

James Robinson, 63, and cousins Michael Hickey, 35, and Vincent Hickey, 42, who were released on unconditional bail in February, were present in the packed courtroom at the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Mr Molloy died in 1981 while serving a 12-year sentence for manslaughter.

In an extraordinary twist in the 19-year campaign to get the convictions overturned, the Court of Appeal freed the Hickeys and Mr Robinson after an independent forensic test, completed a fortnight earlier, revealed that the police had falsified a signed statement from Vincent Hickey purporting to implicate the others and shown it to Mr Molloy to provoke him into making a false confession.

Mr Mansfield told the three judges, Lord Justice Roch and Mr Justices Hidden and Mitchell, that it had been "carefully analysed" which officers must have been involved in



Comrades: James Robinson (left) getting support from Gerard Conlan, one of the Guildford Four whose convictions were overturned by the appeal court

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

that contrivance and in the oppression meted out to Mr Molloy, who was interviewed at least 30 times over 31 hours at Womborne police station, Staffordshire, in the run-up to his "confession." During the interrogation he denied involvement 80 times.

The QC said all the officers were members of the Regional Crime Squad Number Four and the members responsible for Mr Molloy were headed by Detective Inspector Geoffrey Turner. He deputed the since discredited Detective Constable

John Perkins, who died in 1992, and Detective Constable Graham Leake to interview Mr Molloy. The team also included DS Robbins, who was stationed outside the cell where the interviews took place, and Detective Sergeant Dennis Walker. Mr Mansfield said many other more senior officers in the Staffordshire police may have known what was going on in the small Womborne station, in particular, Detective Chief Inspector Wes Watson, who was there for much of the relevant time.

Mr Molloy consistently in-

sisted up to his death that police had shown him a statement under caution, which no longer exists, on which he read Vincent Hickey's name. It was the falsification of this statement which ultimately led Mr Molloy to make a confession - contained in the now infamous exhibit 54 - and led the Crown to announce two months ago that it would not contest the appeal.

Describing the build-up of "oppression" prior to the extraction of the confession, Mr Mansfield told the judges that crucial interviews were con-

ducted in the cells, not in the interview room. "We say this was no coincidence. It was intended to provide an atmosphere of isolation and claustrophobia."

The majority of the interviews conducted by the crime squad officers were not entered in the custody record. This was a minor omission or administrative mess, the QC said. "The officers based at this police station, possibly going up as far as DCI Watson were turning a completely blind eye to what the regional crime squad were doing."

One of the "plays to break Molloy", Mr Mansfield said, was to "plainly and bluntly disbelieve the denials and assert from the beginning that he [Mr Molloy] committed this murder, that he was guilty ... and that nothing short of a confession, at least to presence at the farm, would do."

The most important ploy of all was to hint that others had "grasped him up". Interview records showed DC Perkins telling him: "Do you see what we are getting at, Pat? You are on the brink of no return, the no-options position."

The appeal continues.



Carl Bridgewater: Paperboy murdered at Yew Tree Farm

## Ex-editor faces jail threat in Iraq arms case

Kathy Marks

A former editor of *The Independent* said yesterday that he had not known of an order by a judge restricting the use of confidential documents crucial to the quashing of the convictions of four businessmen in an arms-to-Iraq case.

Jan Hargreaves told the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, that he had believed the newspaper was acting within the law in reproducing fragments of two of the documents in a report on the men's appeal.

The Attorney-General is seeking to have the newspaper fined for contempt of court for publishing the excerpts. Mr Hargreaves, together with Chris Blackhurst, the senior reporter involved, faces a possible prison sentence. At the Court of Appeal hearing in November 1995, the convictions of the four men, who ran Ordtech an arms technology company, were overturned on the grounds that vital documents had been withheld from their defence by the Government.

The men were convicted in 1992 of exporting an assembly line for manufacturing fuses for long-range artillery shells to Iraq. Senior ministers signed Public Interest Immunity certificates to prevent the disclosure to the trial of the documents, which revealed that Paul Grecian, head of Ordtech, had been working with the security services.

Philip Havers QC, counsel for the Attorney-General, argued yesterday that Mr Hargreaves and Mr Blackhurst must have been aware that when the former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, ordered in July 1995 that the documents be made available to the defence, he had directed that they be used only "in connection with the proceedings".

The *Independent* argues that Lord Taylor at no stage made a formal order with sufficient clarity to bind the press.

Mr Blackhurst told the court that he too had been unaware of the July 1995 order, and said he had not read the newspaper cutting in which it was reported. The case continues today.

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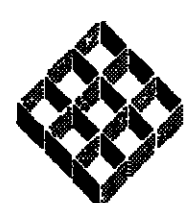
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## Twitchers plan to ruffle feathers with new militant image

Paul McCann and Nicholas Schoon

The cozy binoculars and capgules image of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is on its way out. Britain's sixth-largest charity wants to relaunch itself as a more militant and campaigning environmental organisation embracing younger supporters.

"People think of us as a slightly cuddly birdwatching club," said its public affairs officer, Paul Lewis. "But we want to be seen for what we are, a campaigning environmental organisation."

With 967,000 members and plans to sign up his millionth this year, the society is a larger and wealthier organisation than the UK arms of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. It has a country house headquarters in Bedfordshire, huge areas of

reserves and more than 900 staff around the country. The smaller green organisations might envy these assets, but they have one thing the RSPB is chasing - a younger supporter base of 25- to 40-year-olds.

"We're trying to give the RSPB a harder, younger edge," said Robert Tansey, strategic planner of the society's advertising agency Publicis, which yesterday unveiled a new, harder edged poster campaign. "The current membership tends to be slightly right of centre, over 50 and rather blue stocking."

Even the society's celebrity members tend to be getting on a bit. Liam Gallagher was a member of the society's Young Ornithologist Club, but is not among the society's adult members. Damon Albarn of Blur is a birdwatcher too, but the society does not have him down as a member.

Barbara Young, the organisation's chief executive, emphasises that the RSPB's roots are in campaigning. "We were founded to take on the feather trade for women's hats in the last century." These days it campaigns on issues as diverse as reforming the EU's Common Agricultural Policy to make it more wildlife-friendly, over-fishing in the North Sea, and stopping water companies and

farmers taking excessive quantities of water from rivers and aquifers. It has even commissioned a study on eco-taxation: how the cost of car tax discs should be varied according to how much pollution a car produces. But all these campaigns

have the ultimate common theme of conserving wildlife, including the birds.

Publicis has built a 10ft-wide bird's nest made of barbed wire in Norwich for the launch of the campaign. It plans a nation-wide poster campaign based on this

striking image, which symbolises humanity's threats to many of our native species. Even the sparrow's population has halved in two decades, probably on account of changes in farming practices.

"Our research has found that

people in their late twenties and thirties think a lot more about the environment because they are starting to have children," said Mr Tansey. "We're targeting them with the nest idea because it plugs into their own 'nesting' instincts."

The RSPB is also conducting a national direct-mailing recruitment campaign, to try to attract its one millionth member. The charity already receives £24m a year in donations, making it Britain's sixth-wealthiest charity.



Feathers ruffled: Bird lovers' traditional, rather cosy image (Photograph: Brian Harris) and right, the barbed wire bird's nest created for the latest advertising

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## Haughey 'handed £1.3m to clear debts'

Alan Murdoch  
Dublin

Charles Haughey, the former Irish prime minister, was secretly paid £1.3m by the head of one of Ireland's leading supermarket chains to help meet huge personal debts, a judicial tribunal in Dublin was told yesterday.

The payments, made between 1987 and 1991 according to counsel for the tribunal Denis McCullough, had been traced through accounts in Ulster, London, the Isle of Man, the Cayman Islands and Dublin.

Mr McCullough was summarising evidence to be heard by the tribunal following allegations of extensive payments to politicians by Ben Dunne. Until 1992, he effectively had sole control of his family's clothing and supermarkets group with an annual turnover now close to £1bn.

The revelations led last November to the resignation of transport minister Michael Lowry who received payments estimated by Dunne at £395,000, partly for work for the stores. But the cash channelled through intermediaries to Mr Haughey, who retired as Taoiseach in January 1992 and from the Dail in November the same year, helps explain one of modern Ireland's great intrigues.

Taoiseach four times between 1979 and 1992, few could fathom how his ministerial salary could sustain his regal lifestyle, large mansion, estate, thoroughbred riding stables and private island with holiday home off the Kerry coast.

The tribunal was also told there would be evidence that besides the payments arranged by Mr Haughey's banker, Des Traynor, and Mr Dunne's company solicitor Noel Fox, three bank drafts with a combined value of £210,000 and made out in fictitious names were handed personally to Mr Haughey by Mr Dunne in 1991.

Mr Traynor, who died in 1994 was both an accountant

with Mr Haughey's firm, Haughey Boland, and subsequently head of Guinness Mahon bank in Dublin. The payments began after Mr Traynor, a close friend of Mr Haughey's, had contacted Mr Fox, a key ally who had helped secure Mr Dunne's release after an IRA kidnapping in 1981.

Mr McCullough said Mr Fox was run by Mr Traynor who said he had "a significant business problem", which he understood to mean that it related to Mr Haughey. Mr Traynor indicated he was attempting to assemble a group of benefactors who would each pay £150,000 towards easing Mr Haughey's debts, then put at £700,000.

Mr Dunne, when informed, suggested it would be better for Mr Haughey if he (Mr Dunne) put up the entire amount to prevent the matter becoming public. Asked by tribunal counsel Michael Collins about the idea of five or six people providing money, Mr Dunne quipped "Jesus Christ had 12 apostles and one of them crucified him."

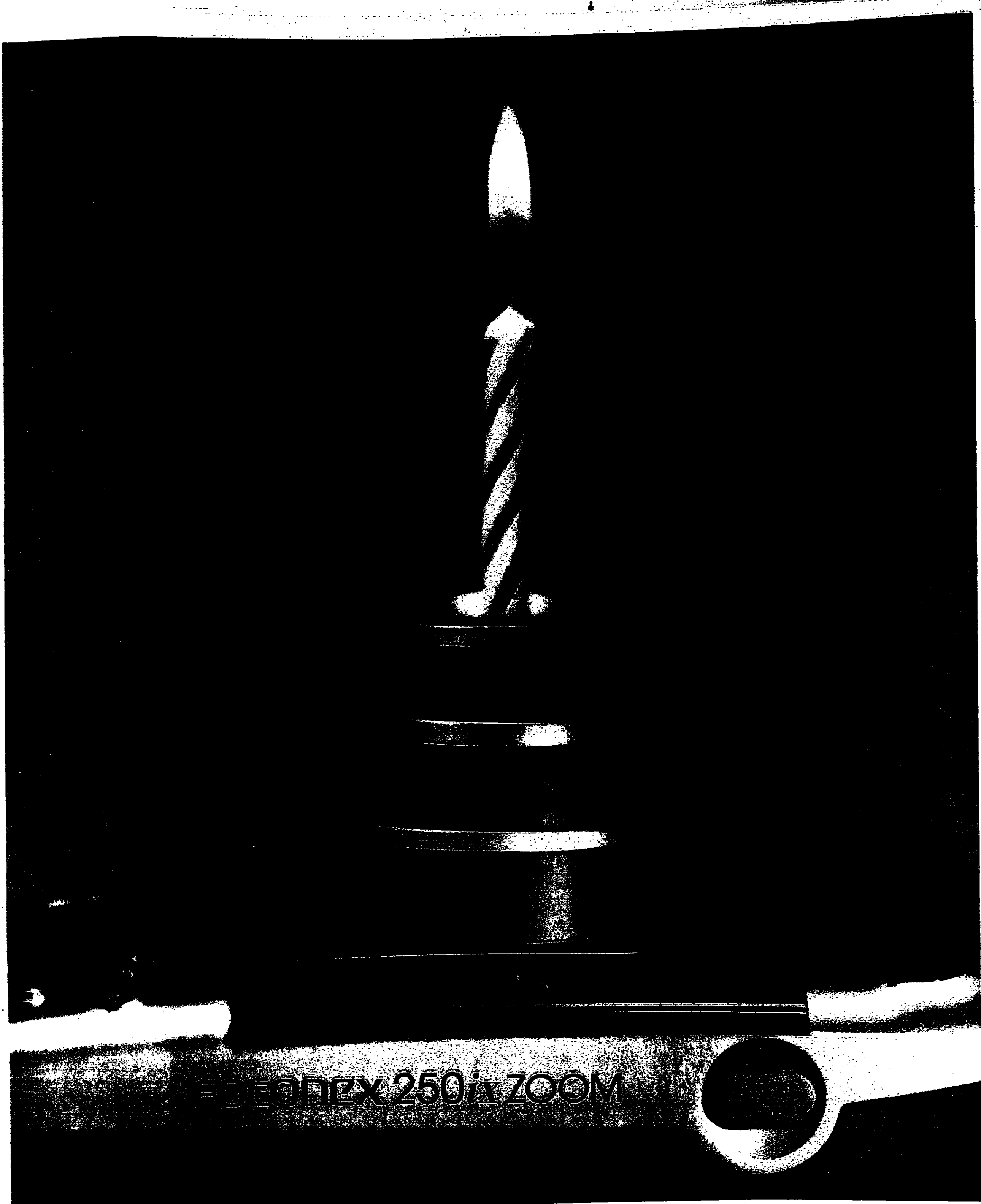
The tribunal revelations emanate from disclosures of widespread payments to politicians made in legal documents by Mr Dunne during a 1992-93 family dispute that preceded the break-up of the Dunnes Stores controlling trust.

Mr Dunne's brothers and sisters bought out his share of the company for a reported sum of £150m after an embarrassing scandal in which Mr Dunne tried to jump from an Orlando hotel balcony after a drink and cocaine session with a call-girl.

After Mr Dunne left the firm, letters were sent to Mr Haughey by Dunne's lawyers when - under new management - the company sought return of its money, the tribunal was told. Mr Haughey wrote in reply denying he received funds from either Dunne or a related company and insisting he had not benefited from any improper payments.

The hearing is expected to continue for several weeks.

Terms and conditions: \*Source: Bly's Guides, Correct as at 21 April 1997. Withdrawal terms and conditions vary from account to account. All interest rate comparisons are based on the inclusion of any bonuses and are for the best paying branch based UK high street notice accounts from the providers referred to. Interest rates shown are for balances of £100,000. Interest rates quoted are variable and gross. For the Platinum Plus account withdrawals are allowed after 90 days' notice, or immediately subject to 90 days' loss of interest on the amount withdrawn. Minimum opening balance £2,500. Interest paid annually or monthly on request. Different interest rates apply to monthly interest. The interest rate bonus of 0.50% gross p.a. will be payable providing no withdrawals or transfers have been made during the 12 months prior to the anniversary of the account being opened. The rate of 6.40% gross p.a. shown includes this bonus. Interest will be payable net of income tax at the rate determined by the Inland Revenue (currently 20%), or subject to the required registration gross. Additional tax will be payable if you are a higher rate tax payer. Interest is calculated daily from the day following receipt, up to and including the day before withdrawal, except for cheques where it is calculated from the fourth banking day following receipt. (Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays are not banking days). Maximum investment with Alliance & Leicester is £500,000 per individual. Full terms and conditions available on request. Alliance & Leicester plc. Registered Office: 49 Park Lane, London, W1Y 4EQ. Company No: 3263713. Registered in England. Authorised as a bank pursuant to the Banking Act 1987. Member of the British Bankers Association.

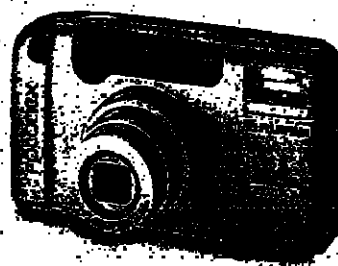


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They

Major  
pledges to  
halt EU  
reform



# election '97

## They think that it's not all over ...

Colin Brown  
Steve Boggan and  
Anthony Bevis

John Major yesterday used *The Independent's* survey of Tory constituencies to repudiate the polls, while senior Labour sources accepted their lead was not as great as the pollsters had been saying.

Both party leaders are now placing Europe at the head of

their campaign agenda, claiming high poll ratings on the emotive subject, but it was *The Independent's* survey of constituencies that concentrated minds on the uncertain state of the campaign.

Mr Major told sixth-form pupils at Leeds Grammar School that the opinion polls were nonsensical. Challenged to say whether he believed genuinely that the Tories could

win the election after trailing so far behind Labour, Mr Major said: "Yes, I do."

He said: "The *Independent* interestingly enough actually chose to go out to the marginal seats, knock on a few doors and talk to people itself rather than just rely on opinion polls."

"Everyone will find out on May 1, but I can tell you I've fought quite a few elections now and what is happening on the

doorstep is not reflected in the opinion polls.

"The polls are rubbish. Four days before the last election all the polls showed me behind by 7 to 10 per cent. I actually won by 7 per cent."

Senior Labour sources said last night that *The Independent's* findings did not unduly concern them, as their own polling suggested a lead of "more than 10 points, but less than 20".

"We err on the side of caution and we have never said that our lead was anything like the 20 or 25 per cent that some of the pollsters have been saying," he said.

Labour's own research suggests that support is holding up well in key marginals.

However, the research also shows that the party's commitment to hold a referendum on a single currency was not getting through. "The trouble about Europe is that, until now, people have only followed it as a matter of Tory division," said one leadership aide.

"Our hope is that people will take more notice during the last week of the campaign and our message will get across."

"One area where we have been pleasantly surprised is in the support we appear to be getting from older people."

"But we feel we still have to do more work on getting young people to vote."

"At the moment, they switch on their television - especially the BBC - and they just see politicians slugging each other off and that promotes the feeling that all politicians are as bad as each other."

One Conservative campaign manager said earlier that Europe was providing the party

with its biggest lead among the voters, which explained why the Prime Minister was so willing to divert from a press conference on grammar schools to talk about Europe yesterday.

Mr Major told his main election press conference: "I think the honest heart of the Conservative Party beats in tune with the heart of the British nation."

### Major pledges to halt EU reform

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major last night clashed with Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission and committed the Tories to putting a brake on moves to a federal Europe at the Amsterdam summit.

In strongly Euro-sceptic tones, the Prime Minister couched his criticism of Mr Santer with a sustained and personal assault on the credibility of Tony Blair's claims to be trusted by the electorate.

Mr Major hurriedly redrafted a speech to a rally in York to highlight his rejection of Mr Santer's earlier remarks that institutional reform with more majority voting was a way of getting out of the trap of a vicious circle of paralysis.

"I disagree. Unlike the Labour leader, I will veto if it is right for Britain. I will keep my feet on the brakes. Mr Blair would go to Amsterdam and put his foot on the accelerator to a federal Europe."

Earlier, Mr Major told a BBC Radio phone-in programme that Mr Santer's remarks "absolutely reinforced the fears" Mr Major had raised a few days ago at a press conference on the Amsterdam summit.

"I do not believe there is an appetite for integration in Europe, with more of the decisions taken in Westminster to be taken in Brussels... I don't want to integrate any further," said Mr Major.

Senior Conservative sources said they were "not disturbed" by Mr Santer's remarks, despite being toned down, because they played into the Tory election strategy of raising Europe as a weapon with which to beat Labour.

Before the last minute changes, it was clear that Mr Major had intended to use his York speech for the most general assault so far on Tony Blair's leadership. He ridiculed Mr Blair on Europe but considerably widened his attack to Mr Blair's past record on CND, the sale of council houses, tax cuts, grant-maintained schools, pensions, wider share-ownership and tougher sentencing.

"If Mr Blair has been so wrong in the past, people can not trust him now to protect our interests in the future."

"He could have chosen Margaret Thatcher. He chose old Labour, can there ever have been a more stunning misjudgment in the history of politics?"

Mr Major said that Mr Blair had accused him of making a fetish out of being isolated in Europe. "It is not isolation, Mr Blair. It is called British national interest. I would rather make a fetish out of protecting that than, like you, surrendering," said Mr Major.

He added: "It is high time Mr Blair apologised to the British people for standing in the way of everything that has made Britain the better place it is today. It is time for Mr Blair to say sorry for getting it wrong time after time."

The Prime Minister's attack was echoed by Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, who said: "The Brussels vision of Europe seems disturbingly similar to that of the Labour Party: an end to the veto; a job-destroying employment chapter; and more powers to the EU Parliament - all part of the Commission's vision and all Labour Party policy."



Spectator oratory: Tony Blair talking to crowds in Chester yesterday (Photograph: David Rose). Below: John Major with Leeds Grammar School pupils (Photograph: Tom Pilton)

### Santer scorns the 'prophets of doom'

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

Jacques Santer, the European Commission president, yesterday stepped into the British election campaign by launching a strong counter-attack against Euro-sceptics who he scorned as "prophets of doom".

Euro-sceptic voices were attempting to "denigrate" Europe's considerable successes, he said, and were intent on "scoring cheap points by caricaturing our legislation and our institutions", he said.

Mr Santer, speaking in the Netherlands, attempted to veil his attack by criticising Euro-sceptics "everywhere" in the union, in the full knowledge that to intervene directly in the British debate would be viewed by all parties as unacceptable interference in national affairs.

However, Mr Santer, and other European leaders, have clearly been taken aback by the virulence of Britain's anti-European fever, and the timing of Mr Santer's broadside is not a coincidence. There are deep fears among Britain's partners that whichever party wins on 1 May, it will find itself shackled to an anti-European agenda for the foreseeable future.

Britain's partners are particularly afraid that if British anti-Europeanism is whipped up any further, far-reaching plans for EU reform, to be signed at Amsterdam in June, could be scuppered by a British veto.

To block the new treaty would be "catastrophic", warned Mr Santer, because it would end the prospect of enlarging the

EU to the east. Greater majority voting and integration must be agreed at Amsterdam if the EU is not to move into "gridlock".

"Those who criticise, do they know what they are talking about? Do they have an equally stimulating alternative? If so what is it?" asked the Commission president. The EU was not devised by "hostile" or "alien" forces but by member governments, he said.

Mr Santer rejected "doom merchants" who present monetary union as a threat to national sovereignty.

Tomorrow the European Commission will publish a report showing that the new euro-zone will be the biggest trading block in the world - bigger than both the dollar and the yen.

The report will highlight more clearly than ever the potential danger to British economic interests if the country stays out of monetary union. Britain is likely to find itself isolated on the world economic stage, the report suggests.

"Let me ask how much sovereignty will be left in a highly integrated world economy with fluctuating exchange rates?"

"Rather than being confused by erratic speculation and uncertainty, citizens should be informed about the changes to come, about the advantages which the euro will hold for them, as consumers, savers, workers or tourists."

"I am convinced that the euro will be there from 1999 onwards. Economic and monetary union will not be delayed."

Mr Euro, page 14



### Patriotic Blair sets out global vision

Steve Boggan

Tony Blair presented his credentials as a leader in Europe and the rest of the world yesterday during a keynote speech heavily laden with patriotism and references to Britain's past greatness.

He contrasted his firm leadership of the Labour Party with John Major's inability to influence events in Europe. Declaring himself the enemy of isolationism, Mr Blair committed Labour to leading the European Union from within and to expanding it eastwards in a spirit of co-operation - "not as some giant and centralised European superstate run from the centre".

Being inside and leading the EU was the only way forward for Britain, he said. However, that did not mean selling out Britain's interests. "I am a British patriot and I am proud to be a British patriot. I love my country. I will always put the interests of my country first. The Britain in my vision is not Britain turning its back on the world, narrow, shy, uncertain. It is a Britain confident of its place in the world, sure of itself, able to negotiate with the world and provide leadership in the world."

He added: "Century upon century it has been the destiny of Britain to lead other nations. That should not be a destiny that is part of our history. It should be part of our future."

On Europe, he said a Labour government would resist "European elites" progressing too quickly. And he said he would enter the international government conference in Amsterdam in June with five key priorities for the development of the EU.

■ To remove the remaining trade barriers of the single market.

■ To promote enlargement to the East and to ensure integration of Cyprus and former Eastern bloc countries.

■ To reform the common agricultural policy.

■ To tackle unemployment and promote flexible labour markets in Europe.

■ To promote a more co-ordinated European foreign policy.

Mr Blair's audience at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester was supposed to contain diplomats and ambassadors from more than 70 countries, but it was depleted by the disruption caused by yesterday's IRA bomb threats. Those who attended heard the Labour leader pledge to beef up Britain's defences, reform the United Nations secretariat, lead within Nato, increase overseas aid and encourage trade around the world.

"The British people want to count for something in the world. They would be deeply frustrated if they thought the decline in the UK's international stature would inevitably mean a smaller part on the world stage. A reduced life of this kind has been the lot of many peoples living in countries that were once great. But it should not be ours. What is really at stake for Britain is the outlook for future generations," he said.

A number of foreign journalists felt that the speech smacked of imperialism and did not reflect the view of Britain seen from abroad. Most foreign diplomats were herded into a private function after the event and sent word via Labour press officers that they were not in a position to express an opinion on Mr Blair's view of Britain as world leader. However, Mouna Naim, acting High Commissioner at the Pakistani embassy, said his vision was encouraging.

### THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

#### THE CAMPAIGN

Education and Europe were the themes of the day, along with the leadership qualities of the Prime Minister.

The Tories' plans to create a grammar school in every town were the subject of their morning press conference, with the Prime Minister promising that parents would decide which schools could be selective.

Tony Blair, meanwhile, was making a speech in Manchester in which he criticised John Major's leadership, particularly over Europe, and claimed that the Conservatives were too divided to govern properly.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, helped to keep the issue of Europe in the news by defending the rights of Tory backbenchers to express their personal views on Europe and to take money for doing so, as more than 200 have done from businessman Paul Symes.

For Labour, the Deputy leader, John Prescott, was claiming that his party would need 10 years in office to complete its programme for change.

The Liberal Democrats focused on health at their morning press conference, saying the National Health Service was a lottery and warning that the slogan "it could be you" took on a whole new meaning when it meant cancer, deafness or lack of treatment.

Senators might look more favourably on green issues than the current one had done.

#### KEY ARGUMENTS

Under pressure over Conservative splits on Europe, John Major hit back. "We are conducting our dispute in an honest way. I may find that frustrating. But we aren't sweeping it under the carpet and hiding it in the Staircase as the Labour Party, who have precisely the same divisions in their party."

"We are facing it honestly - painfully perhaps - but honestly," he said. Tony Blair criticised Mr Major's leadership, or what the Labour leader said was the lack of it, along with what he called a "fetish of isolation" over Europe.

"A narrow, crabbed nationalism, the old force of the right, is reborn in the Conservative Party. It is a natural reaction to insecurity and fear in a changed world, but it leads nowhere," he said.

Peddy Ashdown turned his attention from health and the failings of the two other parties to the mayhem wreaked by the IRA in London and other parts of the country.

"The IRA tactics are clear. They are using the election for publicity, trying to cripple people's lives as they go about their normal business. This is economic terrorism, but it will prove futile," the Liberal Democrat leader said.

#### GOOD DAY

William Hague is punting 3-1 favourites to win 4-Tory leadership contest. Hague has come a long way from addressing the Tory party conference as a teenager in 1977. Though he may be the bookies favourite, at 36 he is unlikely to become leader this time around. He has only been in Parliament since 1989, but is still ranked as favourite alongside Michael Portillo and Michael Howard.

Jacques Santer was nobody's friend yesterday when he waded into the scrap with the Tory sceptics, to find neither Major nor Blair wanted him on their team. Unnamed "doom merchants" wanted to take the EU backwards, he said. John Major said his speech was evidence of federalist ambitions, whilst Labour shifted "the way to resolve the fact that they now appear to have fallen out."

#### ONE TO REMEMBER

Gordon Brown promised more surprises from new Labour when he was quizzed at yesterday's press conference over the decision to use the colour purple as a background to their logos.

The shadow Chancellor said that Labour's new emphasis on purple reflected the party's "passion" for campaigning, adding: "Be prepared for a few surprises over the next few days."

#### BAD DAY

#### HOGWASH

Prominent Tory Euro-sceptic John Redwood attacked Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, saying: "I wouldn't presume to advise John Major, and I myself would not presume to advise Mr Santer to mind his own business because our business in some respects is Mr Santer's business now, given that we are members of the EC."

#### THE OTHER PARTIES

Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish Nationalists, said his party had never been stronger and was set to break the 30 per cent barrier in the polls. Launching a new party document "The Scotland We Seek", Mr Salmond said "independence is the only means to secure a better future for Scotland".

#### MEDIA STAR

Last night's Labour election broadcast described life under the Tories if they were elected for another five-year term. With "Land and Hope and Glory" throughout, the broadcast interspersed shots of cheering, flag-waving Conservatives - including shots of senior Cabinet members filmed at varying speeds - at a party conference, with images of empty hospital wards, shoppers putting food back on to supermarket shelves because they could not afford it and an image of the Union Flag dropping to half mast. All in all, very subtle.

## Problem of image for the ideal Labour candidate

Jojo Moyes

Barbara Follett should be an ideal Labour candidate. She is credited with transforming the party's image, made a laudable attempt in Emily's List to get more women into Parliament, and has an exemplary history in voluntary work.

Yet since the 54-year-old wife of millionaire author Ken Follett first entered the British political fray, she has been dismissed as a "Labour luvvie" and "champagne socialist", derided for Emily's List, and branded Labour's lipstick colour co-ordinating candidate. In short, she has an image problem.

Ms Follett is resigned to bad press. Her years in South Africa, where her first husband was assassinated, have left her with substantial body armour. "One of the things that turns women off politics is what they call public scrutiny, which, when you get down to it, is public misrepresentation," she says. "It doesn't bother me, because you get to feel that there's a truth and even if you're being misrepresented it shouldn't touch you."

What irritates her more is the champagne socialism tag, which invariably accompanies her and her fourth husband (who has postponed his bestseller to write her press releases). "I never even drink champagne. I can't drink - it makes me ill," she says. "I'm more a cappuccino socialist."

As for Follett-as-image-guru: "It was a tiny part of my life... I did it because it was probably necessary and it's much more about what Mother said before you went out - have-you-got-a-clean-hanky type stuff... I gave it up after four years, because it was actually so boring." After two previous attempts to get a seat, she spent the past two years campaigning for Stevenage, Labour's 37th target seat.

When the Folletts bought a cottage in her prospective constituency, she faced accusations that it was simply a springboard to a parliamentary career. She admits: "It's not the most obvious place for me to be. People see me as a rich bitch in a poor town... they've got this ridiculous image." But she says she and Stevenage have much in common, not least because it is populated by those who understand what it is to be an outsider. "I'm not doing this for me, but for my children, grandchildren and because at heart I'm a reformer," she says. "Having



Barbara Follett: Dubbed a champagne socialist, even though she does not drink

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

money - or having Ken's money - doesn't define me, it just gives me more time. I'm lucky."

A swing of only 2.66 per cent will return Stevenage to Labour for the first time since Shirley Williams was defeated in 1979.

"We've done about 88 per cent of the (66,000) constituency and we're now re-cannvassing. We'd done 20,000 by last night." Her daughters say she approaches politics like she approaches clearing out their rooms. She starts at 6am, reels off voters' concerns in statisti-

cal order of priority - "jobs, education, housing, health..." jokes about her "inefficient" doonstepping and plans her schedules on daily and weekly grids.

"This is a place that has suffered dreadfully under the Tories in the last 18 years. It has suffered job losses equivalent to five pit closures," she says. "People here believed that they would have houses for their children, and jobs, and they feel very betrayed." She wears a union badge given to her by one

of the new town's original builders - "some of the best men I've ever met".

Locally, at least, Ms Follett's approach appears to be paying off. In last week's poll she was 27 per cent ahead. Now even the traditionally Conservative Old Town turns up supporters. Karen Leverington, a mother of two, decided Ms Follett "had her finger on the pulse" when she saw her petitioning for their rail services. Stevenage, she said, wanted someone who really "stuck up

for the town - "and she would."

This is where Ms Follett's blanket canvassing makes sense; those who have met her generally support her; those who haven't still deride her. Either way, no one can say she hasn't tried. One is left with the feeling that her campaign team, by guarding her, are actually doing her a disservice - something reiterated by Mrs Leverington. "You know, if more people only spoke to her then they'd know what she's really like."

## New EC ban on beef products is blow for Major

Sarah Helm  
Brussels  
and Fran Abrams

The European Commission is to tighten the blockade against British beef by reimposing a ban on gelatine.

The move, expected to be tabled at a Commission meeting tomorrow, will embarrass John Major, who failed the lifting of the ban almost a year ago as a "victory".

To date, the only success for the Government in its efforts to lift the ban has been the easing of restrictions on the export of beef products, gelatine and semen. Gelatine is used in a wide range of food products and in many cosmetics.

Now even this small success looks likely to be reversed with the reimposition of the gelatine ban. However, several member states, led by Germany, were opposed to any easing of the ban. Emma Bonino, the Consumer Affairs Commissioner, now firmly believes there is cause to fear that gelatine could be contaminated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

Franz Fischler, the Agriculture Commissioner, is expected to support the move when he

presents a new paper on further measures to combat BSE in the European Union.

The worldwide ban on British beef and beef products was imposed in March last year, provoking Mr Major's fury.

The Prime Minister rejected his partners' claims that the widespread presence of BSE in British beef meant a ban was necessary to protect public health, proposing instead to fight the ban with a policy of "non-co-operation".

However, far from securing a lifting of the ban, the ploy angered other European leaders, souring relations on several fronts and undermining Britain's position in the crucial talks on European reform, which will rewrite the Maastricht Treaty.

At key stages of the campaign, Britain found the Commission to be an ally. At first it supported the lifting of the gelatine and semen ban, based on the evidence then available.

Now Brussels is taking a tougher line. Officials are disappointed by the Government's failure to take adequate measures to eradicate BSE in cattle and to ensure that products such as gelatine are protected.

Action has already been tak-

en to prevent British gelatine exporters using infected British beef, and Commission officials say consumers on the Continent can rest assured that no infected British gelatine is circulating.

However, the Commission is expected to propose that only a political decision to reimpose the blanket ban will be totally fail-safe.

The beef ban has cost every household in Britain £160 - the equivalent of two pence on income tax - Labour claimed yesterday. In an attack on the Government's handling of the crisis, the party said it had cost at least £520m in exports. Consumption of beef at home had dropped by 363,000 tonnes between 1995 and 1996 and 28,500 jobs had been threatened.

Labour's food, agriculture and rural affairs spokesman, Gavin Strang, said he had still not had answers on where cattle with BSE had been buried in the early years of the crisis.

The Government had decided not to send the agriculture minister, Douglas Hogg to a Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting in Brussels yesterday. Instead, it had sent Lord Lindsay, a Scottish junior agriculture minister.

### MEDIA WATCH

## Ministers loom large in Labour's fright night

Paul McCann  
Media Correspondent

Last night's Labour election broadcast proved it's not just the Tories who know how to get down and dirty in a negative election campaign.

Most of the broadcast was composed of an image guaranteed to frighten voters: Joy cabinet ministers.

As the strains of Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory" - long the Conservatives' conference closing standard - built to a climax we saw ministers looking pleased with themselves, and not just any ministers. For the first time in the election, all the child-frightening ministers made it on to prime-time television: the Michaels, Howard, Forsyth and Portillo.

"Just imagine what the Tories would do with another five years," a voice warned.

The broadcast then went on to press a series of negative "hot buttons" that would have made the Republican election guru Lee Atwater proud.

First we saw grainy images of hospitals beds in corridors as on-screen text told of 50,000 fewer nurses. As "Land of Hope and Glory" continued to build, the camera cut to worried-looking old people; the on-screen message said old people's homes would be sold by the Tories, but the implication was very much that they really would sell your granny. It cut back to grinning ministers just to underline the point.

Surveillance camera footage of drug dealing and bag snatching were used to make the Tories' record on crime scary. And children were used to contrast with the horrid, gloating Tories. Sweet-faced school children looked worried about

their chance of getting into a decent school. The we had an image that made Fitz the bulldog look like sublimity: a little girl offering her mum a tin of beans only to have her mum put them back because the Tories have put VAT on food.

"No one could be safe and nothing could stop them," said the screen and we were shown a thief with face disguised as a hammer. Perhaps he was meant to be another cabinet minister.

By now, "Land of Hope and Glory" had built to such a fever pitch any confusion in the mind of viewers about its intended irony had probably been overtaken by an urge to hide behind the sofa. All it needed was Ann Widdecombe in a SS uniform, but unfortunately it went out with a whimper: a sand castle carrying the Union Jack was toppled by a wave.



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election '97

# Tories fear poll defeat will ignite vicious power battle

Anthony Bevis  
Political Editor

Senior Conservatives are concerned that the party could become embroiled in an ugly and damaging battle for the party leadership if John Major goes down to defeat in next week's election.

While a number of Cabinet ministers are already positioning themselves for leadership battle after the election, some party grandees are considering how best to avert the anarchy that would follow if Mr Major decided to stand down in the immediate aftermath of a Labour win.

Some of the Prime Minister's friends would advise him to do just that - leave his own party in the lurch, let them fight it out, and, possibly, destroy the party's chances of returning to

office for another decade. Others are putting the future of the party before their loyalty to Mr Major, and are considering an appeal to urge him to stay on for as long as possible in a move to give the party time to settle down and make a mature judgement about its long-term future.

A number of senior Conservatives would prefer Mr Major to stay on as leader until the autumn. This would give the new intake of inexperienced MPs time to measure the quality of the contenders for the succession and to reflect on the mistakes that had been made during the campaign.

Some Tory moderates suspect that John Redwood's supporters would prefer an early contest, in order to "bounce" him into the succession.

But the very idea that he might be helping Mr Redwood

could be enough to keep Mr Major from a precipitate resignation.

Yesterday's *London Evening Standard* reported that a "Save John Major" group of ministers, including Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, and two Northern Ireland Office Ministers, Sir Patrick Mayhew and Michael Ancram, were considering an appeal to get Mr Major to steer the party into calmer waters.

Naturally, Tory officials were quick to dismiss that notion because it smacked of defeatism at a time when party managers were arguing that the party was making something of a mid-campaign comeback.

There were suggestions at the weekend that attempts were also being made to prevent a right-wing "coup" on the executive of the backbench 1922

Committee. The chairman of the 1922 committee executive is a key figure in the timing and management of Conservative leadership elections. If so disposed, he could help fend off a challenge until the autumn.

Speculation has been so rife about plots that Mr Redwood spoke out at the weekend, denying he was already preparing for a swift post-election strike.

While no minister would be foolish enough to set up a formal campaign and risk getting caught red-handed - close confidants of the leading contenders are making discreet preparations for all the eventualities.

The one thing that some contenders do not seem prepared for is a Conservative victory, with Mr Major staying on for another five years as prime minister.

One of his friends told *The Independent* this week that if that happened, a lot of conspirators could expect to get their come-uppance and be out of the Government without much ceremony.

There is undoubtedly a lot of anger in the Major camp about the disloyalty that has been shown during the campaign and by the trouble that has been caused by senior figures such as Kenneth Clarke and Michael Howard, who have this week been in open conflict.

Mr Major has repeatedly refused to confirm that any of his ministers will retain their Cabinet seats after the election. If he is elected, a general purge is possible, under cover of giving younger people a chance of high office and preparing a new generation for party leadership in the millennium.

## Union leader suggests Labour tried to gag him

Stephen Goodwin

The leader of one of Britain's biggest trade unions disclosed yesterday that he had come under pressure not to attend this week's Scottish TUC conference.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB General union, did not name the source of the pressure but his clear implication was that it came from the circle around Tony Blair.

The Labour leadership has tried to distance itself from the centenary gathering of Scottish trade unionists in Glasgow, fearing that headline demands on nationalisation and workers' rights would frighten the

More embarrassing for the Labour leadership than the views of a trade union leader described in the past as "a dinosaur" was Mr Edmonds' suggestion of an attempt to gag him.

"Some of us have not been doing much public speaking during the last few weeks. It was suggested to me that I might plead some other engagements rather than come to Glasgow," he said. When questioned later, Mr Edmonds did not deny that the suggestion came from the Labour leadership, or from its advisers.

There was some comfort for Labour when a call by the public service union Unison (Scotland) for a national minimum wage of 50 per cent of median male earnings was manoeuvred off the agenda.

The formula would have set a minimum of £4.42 an hour, well above any figure that Mr Blair could approve.

Rodney Bickenstaffe, Unison's general secretary, said he was "disappointed" that the demand had been dropped from the agenda but it did not change the union's position, which would put its case to Labour's proposed Low Pay Commission.

The conference also slightly moderated a demand for the renationalisation of the railways. And it overwhelmingly rejected a call for the repeal of all Conservative anti-trade union legislation. A motion from the RMT rail union had called for the "complete renationalisation of the whole railway industry" within the first term of a Labour government. However, after lengthy backroom wrangling, the wording put to the conference simply called on a Labour government to "establish a clear timetable for the return of railway companies to public ownership".

The wording would allow Labour to concentrate on strengthening the existing regulatory framework without immediately committing vast sums of money to renationalisation. Existing passenger franchises could be allowed to run for their full contractual term.

electorate and hand the Conservatives a propaganda gift.

Mr Edmonds' performance was just the sort New Labour had hoped to be spared. Speaking in support of a motion advocating full employment, a four-day week and collective ownership of industry, he was critical of Gordon Brown's determination to hold to public spending totals to the limits set by the present Government.

"The aspirations of the British people cannot be met through the narrow economic limits set by the Tory chancellor," he said. While Mr Edmonds welcomed the use of a windfall tax to invest in job creation, he went on: "I suspect pretty soon that a Labour government will also have to intervene directly to stimulate investment and require industries to train their staff."

It was suggested to me that I might plead other engagements rather than come to Glasgow



Michael Portillo, Secretary of State for Defence, pauses during a visit to Bond Helicopters in Plymouth yesterday, his second visit to the naval port in a month. Photograph: Paul Slater

### AROUND THE REGIONS

## Old feuds may give Labour a Norfolk seat

### Lynn News

In 1812 Spencer Perceval was given an unenviable place in the history books when he gained the dubious honour of being the first British prime minister to be assassinated. The man who ensured Mr Perceval's immortality - in print at least - was John Bellingham, a merchant.

Bellingham lay in wait for the British Prime Minister in the corridors of the House of Commons and shot him dead as he walked down for a committee.

Due, mainly to imprisonment in Russia, Bellingham had lost his fortune in Europe and had become furious after Perceval had refused to make good his losses.

Nearly two centuries and several generations later, the descendants of the two protagonists are in conflict again. The battle place and prize

for this conflict is the constituency of North West Norfolk with Roger Perceval, who despite the different spelling is a descendant of Spencer, flying the flag of the Referendum Party and Henry Bellingham standing under the banner of the Conservative Party.

As it was in 1812, controversy is centred on the subject of Europe. But this time the roles are reversed with Roger Perceval the assassin lurking in the wings ready to strike at an increasingly nervous Henry Bellingham.

Until the emergence of the Referendum Party in North West Norfolk it seemed Bellingham was almost certain to retain his seat which he de-

fends with a 11,864 vote majority. Now a high profile Referendum Party campaign, heavily backed by a King's Lynn businessman, has thrown open the contest.

North West Norfolk has become littered with Referendum Party-style notices as shop windows, electricity poles and tree trunks offer the constituents anything from freedom of destiny to a "last chance to remain British."

Former true-blue Conservatives have been able to defect to the Referendum Party safe in the belief they are not having to support, or more importantly abandon, a particular political wing.

In fact this supposedly apolitical political party seems to have roused its support from passions that encapsulate and incorporate a not uncommon mix of right-wing xenophobia and nationalism.

It is this unspoken right-wing perspective that makes the Referendum Party the perfect alternative for loyal Conservatives who want to make a one off protest - for they are not having to protest about their own beliefs but instead about the actions of their fellow believers. This means the Referendum Party's task is simply to preach to the converted and reassure them their beliefs are correct.

There is, of course, a third leading figure who takes his

place on the battlefield of North West Norfolk.

This is the quiet figure, until recently, of Labour's Dr George Turner and it is he who could gain the ultimate prize from the assassination of Mr Bellingham's election hopes. Labour needs a 9.5 per cent swing to win. The underlying right-wing nature of the Referendum Party helps to ensure traditional and potential Labour voters are kept in the fold so that the votes lost to the Referendum Party are in the main Conservative.

This ultimately means Mr Perceval's assassination attempt on Mr Bellingham combined with the national swing to Tony Blair may unwittingly give Labour the seat. A result few in North West Norfolk would have truly anticipated?

Jonathan Hartley  
of the Lynn News



by Aanonymous

Sarky sat next to Mrs Candidate for the speech, clapping his small hands from time to time when he thought it appropriate, or when he felt the piranhas were watching. He also felt it would be impolite of him, sitting next to this pleasant, chocolate-clad woman, not to salute what her husband was saying; although, to tell the truth, he didn't feel very much like applauding at all.

Irony had always been one of Sarky's strong suits, his smallest glance freighted with tons of the stuff; hence his nickname. Big Al had coined it after watching the video of *Snow White* with one of his children - this vision of little bearded men had put him in mind of the party's compact and hirsute foreign affairs chief, and the man's reputation for barbed wit and impatient intelligence had suggested the name. The Prodigies at headquarters (many of them victims of the famous scorn) had taken to it, and everyone now knew him as Sarky.

Everyone but himself.

He was certainly intelligent enough to appreciate irony when he was its victim; as he was right now. For the speech that the candidate was delivering to the vast sound-deadening modern auditorium this morning (only in an election campaign could you fill half a concert hall with foreign diplomats and television crews at 10 in the morning) - the speech that he was now politely nodding along to - was an implied reproach to almost everything he had ever thought about international affairs. Or, indeed, about leadership.

Key lines punctuating the speech hit him at regular intervals, like slaps across the back of the head. "We believe in strong defence... our armed forces are the most admired in Europe... defence will be built on our national nuclear deterrent... we strongly support Nato enlargement. And 'I am a British patriot, I put my country first'."

Sarky was no saint. He desired power as much as anyone else, and thought that he deserved to exercise a nice big chunk of it. He was not Ego's enemy. But he did not imagine that serving in the Iron Lady's cabinet had been much fun; and even now he had no idea what to expect. Was the boss committed to open government, consultation, co-operation and radical policies? Would he quickly despatch Friend Bobby to a ministerial nunnery? Or was he a charming and dangerous megalomaniac, who would reward his courtiers?

Sarky turned to Mrs Candidate and smiled. "Interesting speech," he said.



notion of leadership. His disdain for the Grey Man's weakness was real enough. Sarky had sat next to him during Commons Question Time and had felt his neighbour's body go rigid with contempt. "I don't hate him," the candidate had once said. "I just can't stand watching him squirm. He was given this high office - this immense responsibility - and he fritters it away. Frankly - and I know it's uncharitable to say it - he disgusts me." Even the hilarious campaign adventures of the Bohemian novelist were taken by the candidate's team as being indicative of a lack of Tory moral fibre. There was no "self-control".

Sarky was not so sure. Was not the Grey Man's true problem that he led a party genuinely divided in two about its own future? Could it really be the case that this historic fissure was purely the product of personal weakness, of one man's whimsiness? He thought not.

This concentration on leadership led him back to the key unanswered question. Was the candidate a saviour or a monster? Did he honestly believe (as this speech suggested) that he had single-handedly saved the party with the assistance of Friend Bobby and the support of his children? "I said I would transform the party, and I have." What about those years when the Welshman had tolled away, facing down the Trots, squaring the barons and losing elections? "Every objective I set in creating a new party, I have achieved." What, alone? A biblical prophet come to judgement?

Was this simply a piece of necessary election hyperbole, designed to contrast the unknown record of the candidate with the all-too-familiar one of the Grey Man - or did he and the retinue actually believe it all?

Sarky was no saint. He desired power as much as anyone else, and thought that he deserved to exercise a nice big chunk of it. He was not Ego's enemy. But he did not imagine that serving in the Iron Lady's cabinet had been much fun; and even now he had no idea what to expect. Was the boss committed to open government, consultation, co-operation and radical policies? Would he quickly despatch Friend Bobby to a ministerial nunnery? Or was he a charming and dangerous megalomaniac, who would reward his courtiers?

Sarky turned to Mrs Candidate and smiled. "Interesting speech," he said.

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Offer also applies to spouses

# Tories plan parental choice over grammars

Frans Abrams and Judith Judd

Shephard says schools would have to make case to her in order to go selective

Parents would decide whether they wanted a grammar school in their town, ministers said yesterday – but only up to a point. The next Conservative education secretary would decide whether or not local demand for selection was strong enough to justify it.

Announcing details of how the Prime Minister's plans for a grammar school in every town would work the current secretary of state, Gillian Shephard, made it clear that schools would have to make a case to her in order to go selective.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that the process by which a com-

prehensive could become a grammar would be similar to the process for opting out – that there would be a parental ballot. However, aides made it clear later that it would be up to the school's governors whether they wanted to hold a ballot or not. They could also decide whether or not to consult parents in feeder primary schools about whether or not they wanted their local secondary school to be a grammar.

Mrs Shephard would not speculate on what would happen if all the schools in an area applied to be selective, as comprehensives in Brom-

ley have done, but an official said later that she would be likely to choose two or three rather than allowing all to go ahead.

Yesterday's announcement also included plans to give local authority comprehensives more control over their budgets, with councils being forced to hand over all the money apart from that needed to carry out statutory obligations such as planning and running welfare services. Under the reform, schools could own their own buildings and be the official employers of their own staff.

Announcing the moves, the Prime

Minister said they would give state schools an independence and freedom they had never had before. There would be no return to the eleven plus, he said, but there would be an increase in diversity.

"Doctrinaire Labour councils won't be able to stand in the way. We just want more good schools that are all aiming to offer the best, and we want more choice in education for parents and more variety for pupils," he said.

Labour attacked the plans, saying they would mean secondary moderns in every town and that they also high-

lighted splits in the cabinet. There had been plans to offer financial incentives to new grammar schools under the government's specialist schools programme, but these were dropped after an internal dispute.

David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, said the proposals would mean many more children would be unable to go to the school of their choice.

"They would deny most parents the opportunity of good schools. Instead a small group of parents could decide to deny to other children the same choice and opportunities which

their own children have," he said.

John Sutton, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, said the plans were profoundly undemocratic: "The parents of potential future pupils and the parents of pupils at other schools will have no say in a matter which directly affects their children's future."

Margaret Tilloch of the Campaign for State Education, the parents' pressure group, said that support for grammar schools had been falling steadily. In 1957 a Labour party poll showed that only 10 per cent opposed selection and in 1967 76 per cent

were in favour of retaining grammar schools. By 1987 a MORI poll showed 62 per cent in favour and a Harris poll last year showed 54 per cent backed a return to full selection.

Margaret Dewar, chairman of the Grammar Schools Association, said: "I would like to see funding go to academic schools as well. I do think that they need some financial incentive."

Peter Miller, president of the Secondary Heads Association, asked how selecting the top 20 or 30 per cent would help under-achievement. "The turmoil over admissions will be made worse by any increase in selective schools. The Conservatives have abdicated their responsibility to plan the system."

## Party leaders quizzed on race issue

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

Paddy Ashdown has warned that French-style National Front racism could occur in Britain unless politicians provide a lead in opposing it.

The Liberal Democrat leader says in an election interview with ZEE TV, a satellite and cable channel that specialises in Asian affairs: "There are those in the Conservative Party, including some rather high-profile figures, who have talked about playing the race and asylum card."

"It may deliver them votes but it could unleash the most unwholy consequences. There is a role for politicians to lead and set examples."

"If they duck out on this issue then they will find the issue devours them, instead of them being able to be the instrument that stops it."

But in a separate interview to be broadcast later this week, John Major goes out of his way to defend Nicholas Budge, successor to Enoch Powell, in Wolverhampton South-West, who has taken a leading role in opposing any further relaxation of immigration law.

Mr Major said that Mr Budge's views had been misunderstood. "Like me he sees a place in the Conservative Party for people of differ-

ent ethnic backgrounds," the Prime Minister said.

Told that the Tories were not seen as "Asian friendly", Mr Major said: "I am sorry if some Asians feel that, because it certainly isn't true. The Conservative Party is open to everyone whether they are Asian, British, Chinese or Caribbean. If they think like a Conservative and share the Conservative philosophy they will be welcome in the party. Asians make a huge contribution to the UK and I would like to see more Asian MPs."

He said: "The Asian culture and other cultures have sunk deep into the British way of life... The old shibboleths and fears that people raised have gone and people now work, check by jowl, with Asian neighbours."

But a survey to be published in London's *Time Out* magazine tomorrow suggests that hardly any black Londoners believe Mr Major is sincerely concerned about the issues affecting them.

The survey found that only 2.5 per cent of those who responded thought he was concerned, and one-quarter of the 18- to 35-year-olds believed that he may even be a racist. More than half of those in the *Time Out* survey were not registered to vote and of those who were, one in five said that they would not be voting on 1 May.



Valiant fight: Tory Margrit Williams canvassing in Tredegar against Labour's Llewellyn Smith, who won a 30,000 majority in 1992

Photograph: Rob Stratton

## Essex woman travels from Kowloon to the Valleys in search of votes

Barrie Clement

The soldierly Paddy Ashdown has set female hearts aflutter during the hustings – well at least those of a certain age.

Yesterday he failed to impress eight-year-old Lucy McMahon of Stithians Primary School, near Truro, Cornwall. Invited to contribute her political opinions to a class poster, "GOVERNMENT – WHAT WE THINK", Ms McMahon ventured: "You should only vote for rich or hunky men."

Asked whether Mr Ashdown fitted the bill, she smiled, declined to reply, but said Sebastian Coe did. The former athlete lives in the village and is the sitting Tory MP for the constituency.

Perhaps the most controversial comment, however, came from the whole of class three. "We think there should be more people like Rolf Harris," they said. One young classmate, called Morwenne, wrote: "I don't think children know what they are talking about, so should not vote." So, people who are 18 years old and over do?

An emerging right-winger called Kirsten demanded that "people should stay in prison longer". She showed a degree of political acumen, however, by siding with the anti-hunt lobby: "People who kill animals for fun should be put in prison for a year."

Later, Mr Ashdown showed admirable restraint when a ferret appeared behind him on a wall as he was interviewed on television. He said the creature was the most patient and docile he had set eyes on.

Elsewhere in Cornwall, the campaign to elicit support from the younger generation got dirtier by the minute.

The Conservatives even offered children a ban on homework. In another outrageous ploy, they promised that a reformed child benefits system under a Conservative government would cut out the middle man, namely parents.

The "mock election" at Saltash Community School is not for the politically squeamish.

One Tory poster, put up in a school corridor, was craftily coloured Liberal Democrat yellow and proclaimed: "The Liberal philosophy – you worked for it, now we will take it; a vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote for higher taxes; the Liberals would rob you of your earnings – why not rob them of your support?"

Conservative supporters, who mysteriously failed to appear during Mr Ashdown's visit to the school, whether through boycott or dilatoriness of the head teacher, had so far refused to take the posters down.

Perhaps the school philosophy at Stithians Primary should be taken on board by politicians of all hues: "Be honest, own up and don't tell lies."

A cold wind knifing down the South Wales valley seemed to spur Margrit Williams, the Tory candidate with the highest mountain in Britain to climb, to greater efforts.

She was out seeking elusive supporters in Tredegar, the heart of the Blaenau Gwent constituency, which in 1992 returned Labour's Llewellyn Smith with a majority of more than 30,000. "I hope you can support me on 1 May," shoppers were told hopefully as they headed down Commercial Street.

Commercial Street was, in name at least, an appropriate locale for Ms Williams to canvass. She was for some time an investment consultant based in Hong Kong. Born in 1964 at Southend-on-Sea in Essex, she lived in Germany for a while, and then served as a councillor in the Tory flagship borough of Wandsworth, south-west London, before embarking on a journey that seems fated to end up as an "Essex Woman Routed by Valleys Man" story in the local paper, the *Gwent Gazette*.

Candidate chases elusive support in Blaenau Gwent against a Labour majority of more than 30,000, reports Tony Heath

to which she used to contribute a column.

The area is saturated with reminders of radicalism. The Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society, a service built with the pennies of miners and steelworkers, was the inspiration for the National Health Service, set up by Aneurin Bevan, the local MP from 1929 to 1960. Four huge stone pillars on a hillside commemorate the man and his works – three represent the towns of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale and Rhymney and the fourth and largest, Bevan himself.

Ms Williams passes it frequently but is unlikely to pay it much heed. Her undoubted energy and commitment qualifies her as one of Baroness Thatcher's doggy fighters.

Not every passer-by accepted the blue-bordered leaflets promising to expose allegations of waste in the local authority where there is a solitary Tory councillor among the 42.

Iona Pettie turned aside, commenting: "The Tories have done precious little for the Valleys since Thatcher got in. They've got no chance here."

A retired education welfare officer, Arthur Morgan, spoke with the authority of his 79 years. "The Tory candidate will get between 2,000 and 3,000 votes," he forecast.

Brian Reardon, cousin of Tredegar snooker star Ray Reardon, lost his job in 1989 when Markham colliery, a few miles outside the town, was closed. His file of job applications is a couple of inches thick, but in seven years he's only worked for six months. "One post in a residential home paid £2.60 an hour. You've got to have a degree to become a caretaker round here," he joked.

"I used to vote Tory, but they've got such a weak leader in John Major that I expect I'll switch to Labour," Sharon Jenkins, a lively 33-year-old trailing her son, Greg, 7, and daughter, Lawri, 5, towards Tesco's, said briskly.

She offers other local figures from another political culture as role models, naming Sir Geoffrey Inkin, who made the kamikaze run in the 1979 election against Michael Foot now chairs two quangos, the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and the Land Authority for Wales, netting nearly £70,000 a year.

Then she paused, and added: "And there's Jonathan Evans." Jonathan Evans? He was born in Tredegar, became Tory MP for next door Brecon and Radnor in 1992 and is defending a majority of 130.

Mr Smith, a Labour left-winger who took over as MP five years ago, when Michael Foot stood down, is understandably confident. He said: "What makes me sad is the way problems created by Tory policies are destroying proud communities."

He collected 79 per cent of the vote in 1992 and interest today centres on how many votes Ms Williams can collect alongside the shares of the Double Democrats Geraldine Layton and Plaid Cymru's Jim Criddle.

Ted Hickey has been a stalwart of the local Tory Party for more than 25 years. A Dunkirk veteran, Justice of the Peace and proud holder of the MBE, he summed up the prospects: "We are flying the flag. That's what we're doing."

Tory standard-bearers come and go in the Valleys like migrant birds. Ms Williams is studiously non-committal about her future. Commercial Street again or Kowloon? "Let's wait until the election's over. You see, I'm fighting to win," she said.

## Blair is a man I can totally believe in, like Gaitskell



How will you vote?

Labour. What I have seen of the campaign so far has impressed me, though I didn't need further convincing that I passionately want a Labour government, both because of the vision of Tony Blair and his colleagues, and also because I long for a competent government.

When we interviewed you in 1992, you were one of the few people who praised Mr Blair specifically. Mr Blair himself is a man I feel I can totally believe in, rather as I used to believe in Gaitskell. I think he has a marvellous team. It looks very good to me.

Are you at all uneasy about Gordon Brown's pledge to stick to Conservative expenditure levels? I think Gordon Brown is right to start with very careful policies. He will obviously have to find some additional taxes, even if not income taxes, in order to bring off the promised education commitments. But I think that can be bound within present public expenditure figures.

In these areas I hope to see considerable changes in policy very quickly, certainly demanding more public expenditure. I think that there are possible savings in social services and defence, and that's what I'd be looking for: the brave changes in policy.

How have you viewed Conserva-

tive education policy over the last five years?

There's no doubt that education has become more of a priority, even for the current government; that's good news. I look to a Labour government to keep it as a top priority together with health. Mr Blair has promised that.

I want to end teacher-bashing, which has continued, even under the present Government, with regrettable backing from the inspectorate. This partly explains the appalling morale of the teaching profession.

When I was a boy in Berlin, my father said to me once: "If you're clever and able enough, you might get into schoolteaching." I long for the day when that can be said in

Britain. Above all, we have an education system, after all these years which is for the top 10 to 30 per cent of children, perhaps the best in the world; and for the bottom 20 to 30 per cent, totally unacceptable.

The single overriding priority for Mr Blunkett and Mr Blair must be to improve the lot of under-achieving pupils and schools. That would cost quite a bit of money, so that's my big priority. Of course there are other priorities in my mind. Not least, I hope that Labour will give culture – as it should be called – a deserved high priority.

Third is Europe: a government which is of one voice, moving us into Europe. I am a mid-European in origin, so I would say this. But I think

we should stop being parochial and just be truly European. I would also like us to take more care of the Third World, with the appalling misery of millions of people there.

You said in 1992 that you were taking the opinion polls with a very large pinch of salt. Are you doing the same this time?

I had great doubts about the polls last time. I don't say more. They are very, very sophisticated now. I haven't the slightest doubt that Labour will win. I think it will be quite a big majority. Nor do I share the view of the sophisticated chattering class who say: "Oh, we hope it won't be too big a majority." I hope that it will be absolutely massive.

I long for a day when we don't have to think of Michael Howard, Mr Lilley, Mr Portillo, and Mr Redwood as our leaders. I just think they're not for our time.

There are some Conservatives who have more liberal and more sensible views. I greatly respect Kenneth Clark, Gillian Shephard, and in some respects the Prime Minister, but some of these people I never want to see again. Unless they are in opposition – I think that will do them good.

You have no doubts about looking forward to 2 May?

No, I'm longing for it. The bigger the majority the better.

Interview by Ben Summers.

لكننا من الأصل



# Combative Netanyahu rides out the storm

Patrick Cockburn  
Jerusalem

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, shows every sign of having ridden out the storm over his appointment of a chief prosecutor who would go easy on his friends and allies in their legal troubles. As Israel begins the Passover holiday none of his cabinet members or the parties

who belong to his coalition had resigned.

Mr Netanyahu counter-attacked on television as soon as attorney-general Elyakim Rubinstein announced on Sunday the Prime Minister would not be indicted. The Israeli leader repeated his favourite tactic of claiming a famous victory and total justification of his actions, although what Mr Rubinstein said was rather different.

Mr Netanyahu said: "I didn't commit any crime and the attorney-general verified this."

In fact Mr Rubinstein said: "There were good grounds to suspect an illegitimate motive [in the appointment], but not enough evidence for a criminal indictment." He also said: "The actions of the Prime Minister raised suspicions."

In the wake of the report issued by the attorney-general

and Edna Arbel, the state attorney, ministers who had appeared to be on the edge of resignation began to announce that they would stick with the government. Even Dan Meridor, the Finance Minister, long a discontented member of the cabinet, is to remain at his post. He is to be a member of a new committee which is to vet senior appointments in future. A poll after the attorney-general's report by the daily *Yediot Aharanot* found that 58 per cent of Israelis did not think Mr Netanyahu should resign, although 40 per cent said he should. The effect of the affair appears to have been to deepen the divide within Israeli society. However, 56 per cent believe that Tzahi Hanegbi, the Justice Minister, who was also not indicted, should resign while 38 per cent thought he should not.

The Prime Minister presented the attacks on him as purely motivated by political animosity. He said: "They cannot accept the fact that the people voted for us and not for them. They cannot accept the fact that we are building on Har Homa. They refuse to accept our vigorous objection to a Palestinian state. They refuse to be reconciled to the fact that we are guarding the Golan Heights."

Palestinians expressed concern yesterday that this rhetoric would lead Mr Netanyahu to be even more intransigent in negotiations with them.

Only one of those against whom the police had asked for indictments, Aryeh Deri, the leader of the religious Shas party, will be prosecuted, which is leading to allegations of discrimination by Israelis from North Africans, who are

the main supporters of Shas.

Mr Netanyahu sounded combative as he claimed that the attorney-general had exonerated him, but the affair has been a further blow to his prestige. The new appointments commission may also make it difficult for him to put his own candidates in top jobs. Five petitions to the Supreme Court call for the attorney-general's decision to be reversed and Mr Netanyahu to be indicted.

## Sixty years on, Guernica still scarred by Hitler's first blitz

Elizabeth Nash  
Guernica

Iñaki de Arzane, still vigorous at 74, has a lively gaze and a ready smile. "It was a beautiful day, just like today," he recalls. "Monday - market day - and the town was packed, because people came to Guernica from the villages all around."

Guernica's 6,000-strong population was swollen to some 10,000 on 26 April 1937, not just with villagers coming to market but with Basque troops and refugees retreating from Franco's approaching nationalist forces. There was uncertainty and fear in the air.

"Our teacher sent us home from school at midday, because he was worried something might happen," Iñaki continues. "Then as we were having lunch, at about 2pm, the church bells started to ring, which was how we sounded the alarm. I ran into the hills with some friends and about an hour later saw the first planes circling a few times and dropping their bombs."

Heinkel and Junkers of Hitler's Condor legion flew up the valley for more than three hours that afternoon, dropping bombs on Guernica's crowded market square and machine gunning its terrified citizens from the air.

The destruction prompted Picasso to produce his masterpiece *Guernica*, which many consider this century's finest painting.

"The pilots came in so low that I saw their faces, their goggles, everything. They opened fire and there was no answering fire; we had no anti-air defence. I heard explosions, saw balloons of smoke. I was scared stiff," Iñaki says.

It was Europe's first aerial bombardment of civilians, and a trial run for the subsequent destruction of Coventry, London, Warsaw and Dresden.

The targets were not strategic. Guernica's arms factories were spared and they still stand beside the railway line. Pablo Izaquiere, who was then a 10-year-old altar boy on bell-ringing duty, hid in the spiral staircase of the church spire.

"I later spent 50 years of my life working in those factories, making pistols - Condor pistols they were called," he smiles at this irony of fate, although any rancour has softened with the years.

Between 500 and 1,000 people died that afternoon; no one knows the exact number.

"My sister was a nurse at the military hospital and said they couldn't tell how many died," Pablo said. "They loaded the



Flames leapt from house to house and left us with nothing but earth beneath our feet. About 500-1,000 people were killed at Guernica

Photograph: Corbis-Bettmann/UP

bodies into carts and dumped them in the cemetery. Many remained beneath the ruins."

Iñaki's eyes fill at the memory of what he saw when he scrambled down from the hills. "It was just rubble," he said. "Houses were burned by incendiary bombs and flames leapt from house to house. We were left in the street with nothing but the earth beneath us and the sky above our heads. Three days later, Franco's troops came in."

Eduardo Vallejo, Mayor of Guernica, is convinced that his city was blitzed because of its importance to the Basques. "Guernica is almost sacred for

us, the cradle of our ancient rights and liberties. We have held democratic assemblies beneath our oak tree for hundreds of years."

He says Franco wanted to punish the Basques for not supporting his revolt against the republic the previous July. "But he was ashamed of what he had done," he said, "and accused the retreating Basques of torching their own city. He died without ever admitting the truth."

Iñaki adds a postscript. "One day in September 1957, I was playing in the rubble and a couple of buses came up carrying smart men in uniforms - Germans. They were Condor pilots.

They asked us what we had seen that day and what had been where, and through an interpreter we told them. They seemed proud of their work. And I had to swallow this for 40 years for fear of imprisonment."

In recent years, local historians have tried to reconstruct events, assembling survivors' memories and scant documentary evidence. "We were concerned that our children were

being taught about the mountains of Australia and the rivers of England but nothing about our own history," says Alberto Iturriarte, a teacher at Guernica's primary school.

"There were no books about Guernica, and the bombardment destroyed the town hall's local archives. We found a lot of material in Madrid in Franco's files on 'Destroyed Regions'. But we still don't know

whose idea the bombardment was - the Nazis' or Franco's. Towards the end of Franco's dictatorship [in 1975], some Francoists said the act was imposed upon him by the Nazis. But there is no documentary evidence either way."

Guernica's ancient oak was spared, a gnarled stump protected in a little stone temple on a grassy knoll, though it is a nearby eucalyptus that scents

the spring air.

Last year the German parliament offered DM3m (£1m) in order to build the town a sports centre, a good-will gesture that Mayor Vallejo appreciates, although he would have preferred a formal apology.

"They can't pay with money for destroying our people," he said. "But they could say sorry, and the 60th anniversary would be a good opportunity."

## US tussle over chemical weapons reaches climax

Mary Dejevsky  
Washington

One of the Clinton administration's most keenly fought political battles may finally be nearing its end with the opening tomorrow of a long-delayed Senate debate on chemical weapons.

The Bill to ratify the international convention on chemical weapons, which would outlaw the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of poison gas and other chemical weapons, was submitted for consideration more than four years ago. But it has had to surmount strong objections from arms control sceptics even to come to debate.

If the necessary two-thirds majority for ratification is achieved at the vote on Thursday, the United States will have joined the club of nations that have signed the treaty.

The treaty has already been ratified by more than 65 states and comes into force next week with or without the US.

If the vote goes against ratification, the US will find itself in the unlikely company of such countries as Iraq, Libya and Iran, which have refused to sign. This is an outcome deplored by President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and defense secretary William Cohen, all of whom have spent weeks lobbying energetically for ratification.

But the outcome is by no means certain. Although the convention has support from Democrats and Republicans and was signed by a Republican president, George Bush, five years ago in Geneva, there is a hard core of Republicans, led by the chairman of the Senate's influential foreign affairs committee, Jesse Helms, that has been adamantly opposed.

They say the treaty would not halt the development or use of chemical weapons, because key countries are not signatories. They say compliance cannot be verified, and that US chemical manufacturers would be subject

to "unconstitutional" searches by international inspectors.

Their principal objection, however, is the obligation on signatories to share information about how to protect themselves from chemical weapons. They say this would jeopardise US national security.

Interviewed on television at the weekend, Ms Albright defended ratification, saying: "People will wonder what is wrong with us if the US fails to ratify a treaty that has 'made in the USA' written all over it." "Can you imagine," she asked, "what it would be like for us to be on the same side as Libya and Iraq?"

Supporters of the treaty argue that verification provisions are the tightest ever of any arms control treaty. They see the objections as deriving less from the chemical weapons convention as framed, than from what they see as a visceral scepticism of arms control itself in a section of the Republican party.

As recently as two weeks

ago, Mr Helms and his allies were holding out for several dozen amendments which would have effectively emasculated the treaty. Now, after a charm offensive by Ms Albright, which included a visit to Mr Helms's home state of North Carolina, and another to Houston, Texas, where she appeared on a platform with George Bush, Mr Helms has lifted some of his objections.

Mr Helms has also wrung a separate concession. Last week, Mr Clinton announced that two independent agencies - the arms control and disarmament agency and the US information agency (which has responsibility for the Voice of America radio station) - would be brought into the State Department. Mr Helms has urged such a reform to increase congressional control of their activities and reduce bureaucracy.

Despite the last-minute horse-trading, there remain on the table five amendments. Each could scupper the treaty.

## Warplane wreckage found in Rockies

Mary Dejevsky

The US warplane that disappeared during a training exercise on 2 April seemed finally to have been located yesterday, when a search aircraft spotted wreckage 12,500 feet up in the Rocky Mountains near Vail in Colorado. Melting snow had exposed pieces of painted metal jutting out from a steep mountainside.

An air force spokesman said he was "99.9 per cent sure" that the missing A-10 had been found. The discovery laid to rest some of the more fanciful speculation about the plane's disappearance, which included abduction by space aliens and the pilot's defection to an illegal extremist militia group.



Spot where the search team found the jet. Photograph: AP

The discovery was made less than 48 hours before the search, which has involved some of the most sophisticated US aeronautical technology, was due to be abandoned.

There was still no trace of the pilot, however, and the air force said that extreme care would have to be applied to planning for any ground search because of the difficulty of the terrain. The operation will be complicated by the possibility that

the plane crashed with four 500lb bombs intact.

According to some reports, the bombs may have exploded on impact. Seismic records studied by the air force, however, showed no evidence of any explosions in the region around the time the plane would have run out of fuel.

Even if the wreckage is that of the missing A-10, there remains the mystery of why the pilot, Captain Craig Butten, whose lifetime ambition had apparently been to become a fighter pilot, broke away from his training formation and flew the plane to the Rockies. The original theory, disputed by his parents and neighbours, was that he might have committed suicide because of family worries.

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Downtown ruin: Firefighters cruising past the burnt-out Security Building in Grand Forks, North Dakota, as they survey damage from the major blaze that broke out on Saturday in the business district of the city already submerged by Red River floods. Photograph: AP/St Paul Pioneer Press

## Brussels claims single currency will sideline UK

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

Plans to appoint a single political figure to represent countries inside the new "euro zone" on the international economic stage are being privately canvassed by member states.

The appointment of a "Mr Euro" figure could have far-reaching implications for Britain should the next government decide not to join the single currency, officials in Brussels concede.

Outside the euro zone, Britain could drastically lose influence in key economic clubs such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Group of Seven (G7) in-

dustrial nations. Britain's voice could become drowned out by representatives of the new "big three" trading blocs: the euro, the dollar and the yen.

Furthermore, Britain's right to have a seat in such powerful international groups as the G7 could even be called into question if it does not join the single currency, say sources close to the discussions. The G7 may have to be reconvened as a new "Group of Three".

The question of how the euro zone countries will promote their individual economic interests with a single voice after the launch of monetary union will be raised tomorrow, when the European Commission publishes a long awaited report on the euro's role on the world stage.

The report, passed yesterday to The Independent, sets out in detail how the new European currency is set to rival the US dollar as the most powerful economic entity in the world.

The Commission paints a rosy picture of a powerful, successful and stable euro dominating world trade in the next millennium.

The report's warning to those countries which do not join is clear. "The introduction of the new money will have major

consequences for member states which do not participate and for third countries."

In view of the massive worldwide influence of the single currency, the bloc will have to adapt its procedures in order to speak "with a common passion" in international discussions. The report sidesteps any direct reference to the appointment of a single figure to sit at these world meetings.

Such a move is still viewed as sensitive as it would set the European Union further down the road towards federal style rule. However, officials in Brussels confirm that debate is underway about how the euro's "common position" could be presented. One option might be to appoint a single, weighty political figure. Another might be to appoint the chairman of the European finance ministers' council.

The political figure, would always be accompanied by the chairman of the new European Central Bank.

In terms of world trade, the report says the euro will account for 20.9 per cent of all dealings, compared with 19.6 per cent for the dollar and 10.5 per cent for the yen. One third of world exports will be paid for in euros after the launch of the single currency, says the report.

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## Seoul fights dirty in war on imports

Richard Lloyd Parry  
Seoul

Last October, a 40-year-old woman named Kim Kyong Suk was murdered in one of the most brutal ways imaginable.

Early one morning, as she was driving home from the bar which she owned, a gang of five young men pulled her from her car, and forced her to tell them her bank PIN. After emptying her bank account, they drove her to an abandoned warehouse, dug a shallow pit and, having knocked her around with a baseball bat, buried her alive.

The killers called themselves the Makka-pa or "Forsaken Life Gang", and they were caught a few days later when police stopped them in their victim's car, a Japanese Honda Accord, and discovered the bloodied baseball bat. Almost as remarkable as the cruelty of their crime was its motivation. "I wanted to take revenge on the world," said one of the gang, 20-year-old Choe Chong Su, when the police asked him why he did it. "And I especially hate people who drive fancy foreign cars."

The shivers this provoked in Korea were unusually intense. For the last 10 months, the media and consumer groups in Seoul have been riding a wave of negative feelings about foreign imports, of which the Makka-pa affair was only the most sensational manifestation. Within days, Seoul newspapers were carrying articles about female motorists cancelling their orders for foreign cars for fear of similar crimes. "It definitely affected sales," says Allan Rushforth, executive director of Rover Korea. "It was a key factor in the message that it is a bad thing to be seen in an imported car."

Without doubt it is a tricky time to be a foreign businessman in South Korea. This week the head of the World Trade Organisation, Renato Ruggiero, became the latest in a series of high-level visitors to draw direct attention to an anti-import drive campaign which foreign diplomats and businessmen claim is being carried out with the approval and indirect encouragement of the Korean government.

The "frugality campaign", as it is called, took off last year when trade statistics began to reveal an alarming downturn in the economy. Last year, Korea's rate of growth was 6.8 per cent, healthy by European standards, but a jolting tumble from the 1995 rate of 9 per cent. More worrying was the fact that a country of 45 million people had a trade deficit of \$23.7bn, second only to the United States.

The mass of Korean imports are capital goods like fuel and heavy machinery - consumer goods make up little more than one-tenth of foreign sales, so a Buy Korean drive is likely to

make little difference to the trade deficit. But this has not prevented an intense and vitriolic campaign which has left foreign firms, including Marks & Spencer, Incubate and United Distillers, on the ropes.

Consumer organisations have launched aggressive campaigns to promote "rational" consumption and domestic produce. An organisation called the Korea Central Council of Nightspot Operators has barred imported drinks from its premises. Small shopkeepers say that they have been visited by representatives of the state tobacco monopoly and ordered not to sell foreign cigarettes under the threat of having their supply of the domestic brands withdrawn. "We've seen pamphlets with cartoons of Uncle Sam stuffing burning cigarettes into the mouths of children," says one whisky importer. "Xenophobic nationalism is the order of the day."

This year, the giant Daewoo conglomerate, which operates hotels, trading companies and department stores, announced

**Xenophobic nationalism is the order of the day. It is bad to be seen in a foreign car**

that it would cease to import all foreign goods. The government insists that the consumer groups are acting independently and that their activities are nothing to do with it, but the most sinister aspects of the campaign bear a markedly official stamp. The French supermarket chain Carrefour has found itself the subject of repeated health checks, sometimes twice a day. Customs inspectors have become uncharacteristically zealous, delaying shipments and invoking the letter of the law: on a consignment of shoes imported by the new Seoul branch of M&S, for instance, the country of origin was written on stickers. Customs insisted it had to be carved into the sole.

Newspapers have carried countless stories with such headlines as "Government Should Put an End to Rude Imports Disease". The government has declined all invitations to denounce the campaign and diplomats and officials are becoming increasingly impatient. "It's government by press release," says one diplomat, "and the beauty of it is that it's all deniable."

French

Saddam orders defiance of UN

China

Indian int

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# French election pivots around euro

Chirac is trying to skate over a sea of domestic troubles by playing the Europe card, writes John Lichfield

Paris - In the British election, the euro has been the wicked fairy. It was excluded from the ball, but insisted on turning up anyway. In the snap French parliamentary election, announced last night by Jacques Chirac, the European single currency will be, so the President hopes, the principal and honoured guest.

As ever, Britain and France are separated by more than 16 miles of water.

Mr Chirac may, however, be as disappointed as John Major with the shape and tone of the campaign, which will end in two rounds of voting on 25 May and 1 June. The President is breaking recent historical precedent by dissolving parliament early, essentially for tactical reasons. Like President Mitterrand, when he called an unnecessary referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Mr Chirac hopes the popularity of Europe will

mend his own unpopularity. He risks finding, as Mitterrand found, that his domestic difficulties will test French commitment to Europe, almost to destruction.

Mr Chirac gave three reasons for calling the election eight months early (backing the hunch of his Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, against his own better judgement). He said the poll would allow France to reject the divisive and destructive message of the far-right National Front, it would give new impetus to his government's state-shrinking reform programme; and, most of all, it would provide a clear, new mandate for France to enter the tough final negotiations on the single currency next spring.

The euro retains broad, but

maybe shallow, support in France. By making it the centre-piece of the campaign, Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé hope to skim over a sea of other economic, fiscal and legal troubles (not least of which is likely legal action this summer against two senior cabinet ministers). The truth is that no new constitutional or political backing for the abolition of the franc was needed after the narrow vote in favour in 1992. The real arguments for bringing the poll forward were tactical: opposition parties were not ready and the economic and electoral climate was likely to turn against the centre-right majority in parliament as the year wore on.

What is true is that France has not yet debated the idea of a single European currency,

even if it has approved it. A thorough debate of Euro in France would be, democratically speaking, a healthy thing but it is not necessarily what Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé are seeking. If it happens, it may not go the way they would hope.

The social and economic reform programme, undertaken unevenly since Mr Chirac was elected President in 1995, remains fundamentally unpopular. There is a grudging acceptance that the state must be shrunk; a desire for lower taxes and lighter social burdens on business. But there is also a broad anxiety that the privatisation of state industries, the reform of health policy, or pensions policy, will take France on an alien Anglo-Saxon course towards economic liberalism.

The great miracle, and mystery, is that no live political connection has been made between domestic reforms and spending cuts and the need to prepare the economy for Euro. The Front and the Communist Party, as well as dissident voices within the centre-right and centre-left, will use the election campaign to make precisely that connection if they can.

It is President Chirac and Mr Juppé's gamble - one among several - that such a debate would do most damage to the main opposition party, Lionel Jospin's Socialists.

For weeks Mr Jospin has been floundering in search of a coherent, alternative policy which would support the euro but offer a gentler alternative to the Juppé reforms.

The snap election also catches the Socialists (as Mr Juppé gambled it would) halfway through the feminisation and rejuvenation of their front-line troops.

By party edict, one third of candidates must be women. Most are chosen but few have started working on their constituencies. Even before the President's formal announcement, Mr Jospin seemed to fall into the Euro trap.

He said he still supported the single currency but not at any price and not if it required further deep cuts in public spending. The centre-right sprang on this apparent gaffe: one minister said Mr Jospin had "completely lost his head".

But this issue could play against the government, as

much as against Mr Jospin. A series of conflicting leaks in recent days has suggested France may be missing the Maastricht spending targets and further harsh, emergency cuts may be needed, especially in social security (ie mostly, in practice, in health spending). In any event, next year's budget will be a very tough one. In the meantime, the economic recovery is stuttering and unemployment refuses to retreat. Further leaks of disappointing budget figures could provide an explosive live wire between Euro and domestic spending cuts which the FN, Communists and others would happily exploit.

Mr Chirac is not, formally speaking, standing for election. His presidential mandate extends to 2002. But, in a sense,

he has more riding on this campaign than Mr Juppé. If the Socialists, Communists and greens emerge with a majority - which the polls suggest is unlikely but possible - the President could face five years of "co-habitation" with a rag-tag centre-left parliament and government.

Looked at one way, Mr Chirac is betting his career on the tactical instinct of an unpopular Prime Minister, whose main attribute is that there is no coherent alternative. Put another way, Mr Chirac, the heir of de Gaulle, is gambling on the Euro-enthusiasm of a majority of the French people: their willingness to embrace the grand design and long-term promise of the euro, without examining too closely the short-term small print. The alternative - waiting until next March - must have looked very bleak indeed.

## Saddam orders defiance of UN

Wael Faleh  
Associated Press

Baghdad - In a fresh display of his trademark brinkmanship, President Saddam Hussein yesterday ordered his helicopters to defy a no-fly zone enforced by American jets and fly to the Iraqi-Saudi border to bring back Iraqis returning from the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

An official statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, vowed "suitable response" if the United States interfered with the flights.

The White House warned Iraq against violating the no-fly zone, but said it would not attack the helicopters.

Western allies introduced the no-fly zone after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. It is meant to protect inhabitants of southern Iraq from reprisals by President Saddam's army after an unsuccessful anti-government revolt in the area.

The zone was extended in September to punish President Saddam for sending his army into northern Iraq to support one Kurdish faction against another. It now covers an area stretching from the southern suburbs of Baghdad down to Iraq's borders with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The Iraqi News Agency said helicopters would begin ferrying "sick and exhausted" pilgrims yesterday, but did not say how many aircraft would be involved or give the number of pilgrims.

But, by nightfall, there was no word from Iraqi officials or the state-run media if any flights had taken place and reports in Baghdad were told by officials they would be flown to the Saudi border today.

The decision to use helicopters to ferry home the pilgrims was made after a joint meeting yesterday of the Revolutionary Command Council and the leadership of the ruling Baath Party - Iraq's highest bodies. The meeting was chaired by President Saddam.

On 9 April, President Saddam sent an Iraqi Airways jet carrying 104 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in defiance of United Nations sanctions imposed in 1990 for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions ban flights in and out of Iraq.

The United States failed last week to persuade the Security Council to condemn the Iraqi flight, settling instead for a mild rebuke.

Yesterday's announcement is the latest of several attempts by the Iraqi leadership to test the resolve of the international community, particularly the United States, to maintain Iraq's isolation.

## China's wide-eyed army tiptoes in



New territory: Major General Bryan Dutton (left) welcoming Major General Zhou Borong to Hong Kong yesterday

Photograph: AP

Stephen Vines  
Hong Kong

### Hong Kong 香港 handover

For years Hong Kong has been worrying about China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) crossing the border. Now it has happened, but the full impact was a little muted by the advance guard being caught up in one of the colony's famous traffic jams.

Yesterday 40 unarmed soldiers arrived in Hong Kong as

the first part of the advance guard which will prepare for the arrival of the full garrison after the British army departs on 30

June. Months of acrimonious negotiation preceded this historic event, which was something of an anti-climax. Packed

in eight mini-buses and cars the bemused looking soldiers made their way from the border to the Prince of Wales Barracks situated in the heart of Hong Kong's financial district.

Their commander, Major-General Zhou Borong, strode out of his modest black car looking pleased with himself and with the buildings which are about to become the PLA's new Hong Kong headquarters.

The British put on a suitably modest welcoming ceremony, most of which was not conducted in front of the media who both outnumbered - and looked more terrifying than - the incoming PLA force.

"This is a historic moment for both British and Chinese armed forces," boomed Major General Bryan Dutton, the Commander of the British Forces, as he stood beside General Zhou, who gave a predictable reply in Chinese.

British and Chinese negotiators are still hard at it trying to agree on how many more PLA troops will be allowed in before the handover of power. It seems likely that China will eventually post some 10,000 soldiers in Hong Kong, which is about the number Britain stationed in the colony before the big drawdown in 1994.

Hong Kong people remain wary of the PLA, following its role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. However, a poll which appeared in the *Ming Pao* newspaper yesterday showed that only 29 per cent of those interviewed said they were afraid of the PLA being stationed in the territory. Thirty five per cent had no such fears.

## significant shorts

### Sudan treaty may pave way for a wider peace

Sudan's Islamic government and four southern rebel groups signed a treaty to end the 14-year-old civil war. A referendum will be held in which southerners will decide whether to secede. The treaty also gives the south more power running daily affairs, including using local customs instead of the Islamic law applied in the north. Former US president Jimmy Carter, who visited Sudan to discuss ways of stopping the war, said the treaty could pave the way for talks between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the main rebel group in the south. The four rebel groups that signed the treaty broke away from SPLA in the early 1990s. AP - Khartoum

### Refugee aid effort suspended

Aid workers suspended operations in Rwandan refugee camps after an outbreak of looting and murder and attacks on foreigners by Zaireans. The murder of six local people sent Zaireans on a rampage, attacking foreigners and looting supplies near Kasese, 16 miles from Kigali. Though it was not clear who burst into three Zairean homes and machine-gunned everyone inside, residents and Zairean rebel officials blamed Rwandans from nearby refugee camps. AP - Kasese

### Bulgarian victor seeks backing

The Union of Democratic Forces, which won a big parliamentary majority in Saturday's elections, said it would meet other parties today to seek support for its programme to lead Bulgaria out of crisis. The UDF leader, Ivan Kostov, said his priorities were carrying out reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund, fighting organised crime and corruption, opening secret police files on public figures and bringing Bulgaria into the European Union and Nato. Reuters - Sofia

### Bardot berates Muscovites

Brigitte Bardot, actress turned animal-rights activist, attacked the Moscow authorities for a "planned massacre" of stray animals during the city's 850th anniversary. "I am... horrified to learn that preparations for the celebrations include a massacre of all the city's strays," she said in a letter. Reuters - Paris

### Threat to sue Le Pen

An anti-racist group said it would sue the French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen for saying gas chambers had nothing to do with anti-Semitism and repeating that they were a mere detail of the Second World War. France's Movement against Racism said Mr Le Pen's comment, in an interview with the *New Yorker*, following his espousal of racial inequality, was part of "a deliberate strategy of inciting racial hatred". Reuters - Paris

### Allies pour into Viora

Italian and Greek troops poured into the Albanian port of Viora and secured a key bridgehead with a show of force. Nearly a week after soldiers from a multi-national security force secured two key ports of entry, Italian and Greek troops drove into Viora as Italian marines splashed ashore in a seaborne landing. Reuters - Viora

### Chechens honour slain leader

Chechens gathered in a field to honour the separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev on the first anniversary of his death. He was killed by a Russian rocket which struck as he spoke on his satellite phone. Reuters - Gekhi-Chu

### Pole jailed over prostitute ring

A Polish court jailed a man for seven years for sending young women to work in brothels in Germany and Switzerland. The provincial court in the north-western port city Szczecin also fined the 32-year-old Pole, identified only as Wlodzimierz R. Reuters - Warsaw

## Indian intrigue on hold as PM is sworn in

Jan McGirk  
New Delhi

India's mild-mannered foreign minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, was sworn in yesterday as Indian Prime Minister, thus ending three weeks of political intrigue and dithering in New Delhi. The capital seemed relieved to avoid the suspense of another national election and to get on with business as usual.

Mr Gujral is the third prime minister to take power in Delhi since a hung parliament was won in last spring. The 77-year-old former diplomat has a white beard and resembles a beetle-browed Kentucky Colonel. Sander, stern but benign. Af-

ter he took vows at the Presidential Palace, Mr Gujral promised "clean government" which would "root out corruption". But he did not refer to the Congress Party, whose abrupt withdrawal from the coalition precipitated this unexpected political crisis.

"Elections are costly but the price to be paid for instability and indecision is even greater," said Atal Bihari Vajpayee, leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, who held the most seats in Parliament and would gain the most if Mr Gujral founders. To block the rise of the Hindu right, Congress has agreed to support a revamped United Front from outside.

Mr Gujral has a reputation for integrity and a long political track record. Although both his parents were ardent Congress Party workers and he himself was jailed in 1942 as a student leader of the Quit India movement, Mr Gujral resigned from the Congress Party shortly after the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977. Later, as a member of parliament for the populist Janata Dal, Mr Gujral served twice as foreign minister.

Born before partition in Jhelum, now across the border, Mr Gujral drew praise for his ability to bridge differences with neighbouring Pakistan. Insiders hope that the new Prime Minister's wanted statesmanship can heal the rifts between unlikely political allies, now that Mr Gowda has been sacrificed for stability.

"He is not an opportunist and that's what makes me apprehensive of his ability to lead a bunch of unprincipled opportunists who have got together in what is called the United Front," said Mani Shankar Aiyar, a New Delhi political columnist.

The outgoing Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, was clearly annoyed by Mr Gujral's selection - especially because his own regional party, the Tamil Maanila Congress, was briefly tipped as the favourite to

take over the United Front coalition. The TMC have now deserted the 13-partner ruling coalition.

But Mr Gujral, who is expected to take on the portfolio of Finance Minister while retaining his old job as Foreign Minister, intends to push through the pro-market budget put forward by the ousted government, probably by end of this month. Such a move will signal stability and may encourage foreign investment in the region.

With the appointment of Mr Gujral, after two successive prime ministers from south India, the political power base has again shifted to the traditional cattle-rearing land of the north.

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**Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister**



# A vote for Sinn Fein is a vote for violence

The people of Ireland have expressed a yearning for a lasting peace settlement and a new democracy. If this challenge is to be translated into reality then we must all respond to it with courage and imagination. Not *The Independent's* words, but those of Gerry Adams, parliamentary candidate and would-be new democrat. It is easy to condemn the hypocrisy and self-importance of these sentiments, penned by an apologist for terrorism in his autobiography. But condemnation is not enough. It is easy to satirise the "courage and imagination" with which the IRA has prosecuted its pre-election campaign of disruption in England. It has certainly been imaginative, if the courage involved in telephone hoaxing is less apparent. But mockery is not enough. It is all too easy to point out the counter-productive illogic of the IRA-Sinn Fein campaign for a united Ireland. The idea that, by forcing much of the population of London yesterday and great swathes of Britain last week to get on their bikes to go to work, the cause of Irish republicanism is advanced is moonshine.

The people of London were pushed into deep thought about whether the car economy really is sustainable, whether global warming really has changed the weather, whether there is anything that can be done to thwart tactical disruption of British national life

by the use of code-words and the occasional real bomb. The one thing they did not think about, except possibly when prompted by journalists and phone-ins and six-year-olds repeatedly asking "Why?", was about the injustice suffered by the nationalist population of Northern Ireland since 1922.

And if they had thought about it, they were hardly likely to exclaim, as they sat in what seemed like city-wide gridlock, "My goodness, that Gerry Adams is quite right, after all." Many people in Great Britain already think the troops should be withdrawn from Northern Ireland and the territory handed to the Irish Republic – but mainly on the basis that it is a tangled mess and should be left to the Irish themselves to sort out. But those who disagree, mainly because a majority in Northern Ireland wants to remain in the United Kingdom, are not going to be swayed by terrorism.

If they were swayed, they might do worse than read Mr Adams's autobiography, which would only have the effect of strengthening their original view. The impassioned call for political leadership all round, a new democracy and "an inclusive process of negotiation" is negated by an unyielding statement of the goal, described as "a settlement between the people of Britain and the people of the island of Ireland, based on respect for our mutual independence", which is only a wordy way



of saying "a united Ireland". The book confirms that the plausible Sinn Fein leader, who at the weekend proclaimed "a dream" of a peaceful Ireland, is a spokesman for the men of violence and indeed that he was one of them himself. For, while Londoners, Mancunians and Grand National racegoers might tut with irritation while grudgingly admitting relief that the new IRA strategy has not killed anyone on the mainland (yet), it must be remembered that in Northern Ireland the IRA is still torturing, intimidating and killing. Last month the IRA shot a soldier dead; earlier this month it shot and almost killed a policewoman.

It is, however, not enough to condemn this odious twisting of the language of democracy, in which violence can be justified as a way of seeking a united Ireland, when the people of Northern or Southern Ireland reject the violence and, on these terms, the forced unification too. Why? Because Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness do represent a community of real people in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein may represent only 15 per cent of the vote, but the sense of grievance that animates this section of our society is enough to sustain a

campaign of terror for decades to come. It has to be recognised that Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness are walking a tightrope, trying to retain their credibility with the dark forces behind them while attempting to deliver something concrete for their constituents.

So, what way forward after the election? In the long term, the right approach must be to make the republican minority feel that its aspirations are taken seriously – however incompatible they are with the aspirations of others. That is the underlying argument for including Sinn Fein in all-party talks. It is an urgent matter: the new government, of whichever party, could face a crisis in Northern Ireland within weeks. The Orange marching season has already begun, with the hot month of July not far away. John Major got stuck on the weapons issue, but there is a case for a new Labour government being bolder. History would not condemn Tony Blair for talking to terrorists who retained their arms in the short term if the outcome were a lasting peace or even, more likely, a succession of temporary cease-fires which might grow into a longer peace. If it did not succeed, what would have been lost?

But before then, the general election itself offers a chance to engage with the republican communities of West Belfast, Mid-Ulster and West Tyrone, the only three constituencies which could elect Sinn Fein MPs. When Sinn

Fein polled its record 15.5 per cent in the Forum elections last year, it was widely interpreted as a vote for a new cease-fire and for the channelling of republican demands into the democratic sphere. But if Sinn Fein polls well on Thursday week, it will be interpreted as a vote for violence and for a continuation of the campaign of terror. Let us send a message to the electors in those seats: this time, vote for anyone except Sinn Fein.

## Labour's passion for purple

What happens when you take bright, pillar-box socialism red and mix it with rich, aristocratic Tory blue? You can try this at home, but the answer is purple. Question: why is purple the new Labour colour? Does it have anything to do with a subtle suggestion from Millbank spin-people that they are moving deftly rightwards? Will the New Labour purple deepen and deepen so that, one day, when no one is paying attention, it suddenly looks indistinguishable from blue – a good colour to go with Union Jacks and bulldogs? What a cynical thought: we are assured that the reason is simply that purple is the "colour of passion". Fair enough. But a passion for what?

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### What can the IRA hope to achieve?

Sir: Could a spokesman for the IRA explain to me as a working, travelling Londoner what my response should be to bomb threats which close London stations? My first instinct is to curse the IRA and then maybe all the Irish, North and South, but that is neither fair nor helpful.

If the bombs are a punishment for past history someone could argue a justification, but no progress is made to a future solution. Does the IRA (and Sinn Fein) not realise that the obstacle to their wishes is not the British public but a large number of the people of Northern Ireland? I do not say "majority", because I believe and hope that the majority want peace and the possibility to live their lives without disruption.

For nearly 30 years, IRA tactics have been met only with intransigence and retaliation. I do not understand what the current campaign can, or hopes to, achieve. NICHOLAS HOOTON London SE8

### Education for a rich élite

Sir: You are right (leading article, 21 April) to suggest that politicians are only pretending that education is their first, second and third priority.

If it really were, not only would they think their ideas through more clearly, but they (and you) would devote some space to the plight of tertiary education, public spending on which (excluding tuition fees and maintenance grants) puts the UK second from bottom among OECD nations.

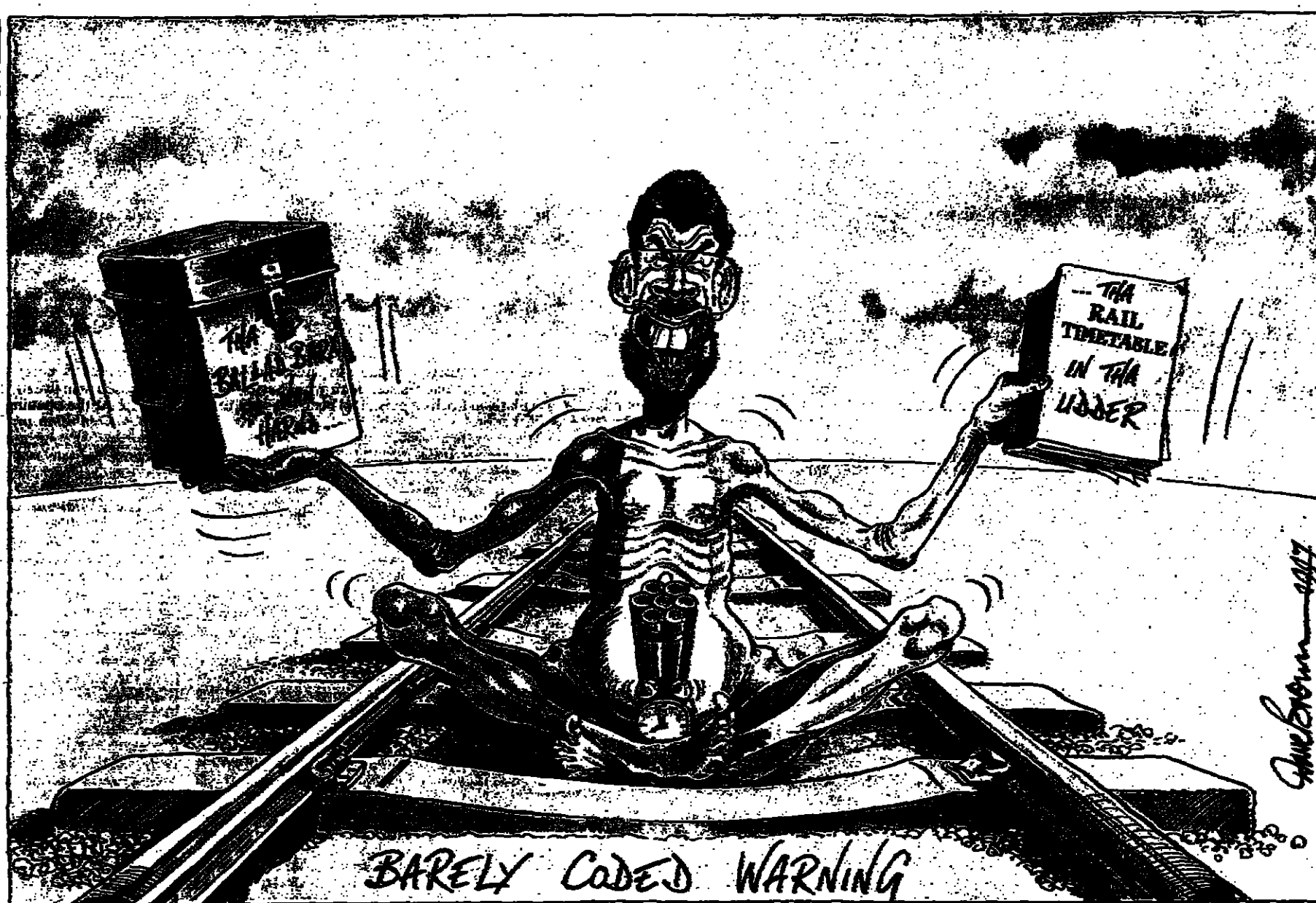
You are also right to dismiss simplistic appeals for a return to selective schools. However, you are wrong to imply that selection no longer exists, or that current selection criteria are defensible.

Figures published last week reveal that whereas a majority of the young people from the most affluent neighbourhoods enter higher education, only 10 per cent of young people from the poorest neighbourhoods do so.

This is because the schools serving richer neighbourhoods (particularly the public schools) operate their selection primarily on the criterion of affluence. We have moved from a system of higher education which was small though largely meritocratic to one which is larger but increasingly elitist. This is an issue which no party is addressing squarely. P K BURGESS President Association of University Teachers London W11

Sir: Your correspondents (Letters, 19 April) rightly point out how all the political rhetoric about the education system can be undercut by observing where government ministers send their children to be educated and how much they are prepared to pay.

But before jumping to the conclusion that abolition of private education is the key to improving state schools, let us be cautious. The last 10 years of the National Curriculum (this does not apply to the private sector) have seen a remarkable shift in perception of what schools are all about. Both Labour and Conservatives see



### A tactical vote is a negative vote

Sir: I was both saddened and somewhat amused by Bruce Kent's letter (21 April) attacking Vanessa Redgrave for her intention to vote Liberal Democrat.

It is sad to see Bruce Kent reduced to supporting "tactical" voting. I admired him as a passionate and articulate campaigner for CND in the Eighties who put principles before pragmatism and played a prominent role in the opposition to Conservative defence policies.

Tactical voting is better described as negative voting, where voters are asked to put their views to one side and vote to stop another candidate from winning. It rests on a series of questionable assumptions about voting behaviour and the ability of forecasters such as Mr Kent (and Mystic Meg, perhaps) to predict the outcome in any constituency. ROBERT MEADOWCROFT London E10

Sir: You are correct to remind us that "It's not over yet" in your lead report of 21 April. But your focus group survey does not "confound the polls" – it bears out their figures with almost uncanny accuracy.

A close examination of the voting preferences expressed by the 30 people interviewed reveals that of the 24 who said they voted Tory last time, only 13 have definitely decided to do so again, five are undecided and six have switched to other parties. Thus, even if all five "undecideds" return to the Tory fold, the party will still have lost a quarter (six out of 24) of its former supporters. This is precisely in line with recent opinion polls, which show the Tories down from their 42 per cent share of the vote in 1992 to about 31 per cent now – a fall of one quarter. NICK CATTARMOLE London SW16

Sir: While we were driving in Norfolk recently my daughter said that she felt sorry for the Conservatives. I asked why. She said that they all seemed to be homeless; after all, nearly all of their election posters are in fields and not outside houses, like those of the other parties. HUMPHREY BORGINS North Elmham, Norfolk

Sir: The Tory manifesto claims at page 44 that Britain under the party's stewardship is "A World Leader in Sports, Arts and Culture". Arts, perhaps; culture, even; but sport? I may, as a residual Oz, be slightly biased. Even so, doesn't this make it as Frantic Boast of the Campaign? BRUCE PAGE London EC2

Sir: Your report that the Secretary of State for the Environment has changed his mind on the planting of lucrative flax in an East Sussex site of special scientific interest surely has little to do with the merits of nature conservation. Rather it has everything to do with the fact that Sir Ivo Pemberton, middle-class late figure and certain Tory in *The Archers*, intended to replant the whole of Orange Farm with it once the Grundys were evicted. Mr Gummer's political antennae remain as finely tuned as his research assistant's radio. CHRIS MOORHOUSE Sheffield

education as having an overwhelmingly economic purpose. There are levels of attainment to be reached, norms to be met. Testing, assessment, measures of value are the new language. Where have the liberal values of education gone? If they are thriving anywhere it will be in the private sector, albeit a small part of it.

A healthy education system needs more than an equitable distribution of resources; if it is to be worth having, it needs room for dissent and variety. Education is too important to be left in the hands of the Government. PETER POOL Shipley West Yorkshire

Sir: Your article on "phony addresses and religious conversions" (17 April) caught my attention as for several years I served as a governor of a local Church of England infants' school with special responsibility for admissions. This was, and still is, a highly popular school which therefore had to apply strict criteria for admission.

We used a simple way of a verifying a child's home address which requires more than a compliant friend to falsify; that is, to insist on seeing the child benefit book or document for that particular child. When an offer of a place was made, the parent or carer was asked to return the acceptance in person and at the same time to show the child benefit document to the school secretary, if they declined to do this, the offer of a place would be withdrawn. I believe that in this way we were able to eliminate the sort of dishonesty

over addresses described in your article. JOANNA FRENCH London SE21

Sir: On page 3 of today's edition (21 April) you reveal that Eton College, a charitable institution used by the very wealthy, has assets of £13.1m. On page 9 a story on hospital waiting lists now exceeding 1.1 million. On the letters page a plea for continued state subsidy for the wealthy to educate their children.

Surely the Tory campaign will reveal plans to stop this waste of public money. By shutting more hospitals. JONATHAN DUMBELL London E11

### Aid with too many strings

Sir: Your front page lead of 19 April was a valiant attempt to raise the election campaign to issues of aid and development. It rightly emphasised the good work done by Chancellor Kenneth Clark in getting Western countries to agree to debt relief proposals and contrasted this with the role of the IMF, and the USA in particular, in delaying their introduction and tying them to the kind of economic shock treatment seen in Eastern Europe.

However, your economics editor, Diane Coyle, does no service to an informed debate by telling readers that "the

Conservative manifesto does not mention aid, while Labour's affirms its commitment to spending 0.7 per cent of national income on overseas aid". In truth, not only does the Tory manifesto mention aid, but in many respects it says much the same about it as Labour, while both parties make clear that the UK's target of 0.7 per cent of GDP is a spending objective, not a promise.

In one crucial respect, though, they are rather different. The Tories want to focus aid on countries "growing towards self-sufficiency under democratic government", while Labour wants to target aid to those in greatest need. While the Conservatives seem to expect countries such as Rwanda to play by "Westminster rules", Labour is interested only in the poorest of the poor.

But where does any of this leave those developing countries that aren't starving, or show precious little sign of "growing towards democracy"? NEIL PATRICK London N7

### British Library goes online

Sir: I sympathise with the frustration experienced by Mike Atkinson (letter, 16 April) in trying to gain online access to the holdings of the British Library, but can assure him that his frustration will be short-lived. On 20 May, in response to our

users' needs and wishes, the British Library will launch OPAC 97, which will provide free access via the World Wide Web to the main reading room catalogues. Anyone with Internet access and a Web browser will have access to OPAC 97 without the need for any additional software or system.

A digitisation programme comparable to that of the Library of Congress would need funding comparable to that given to our American colleagues. Sadly, such resources seem unlikely to be forthcoming from this or any other government in the near future. BRIAN LANG Chief Executive The British Library London NW1

### Church and state belong apart

Sir: Andrew Brown's article "Frailty, thy name is Williamson" (15 April) raises one big question. Not that of the ordination of women priests (as a Nonconformist I recognise the priesthood of all believers), but that of the disestablishment of the Church of England. At a time when constitutional reform is back on the political agenda no one seems to be asking whether it is about time we reviewed the constitutional anomaly that is the Anglican Church. The legal shenanigans over the ordination of women priests instigated by Paul Williamson are both costly and absurd. Why

should the state have a say in internal church matters? It is about time that we recognised that church and state are two separate institutions with two different goals. The church is to preach the gospel and function as salt and light in society. The state is to provide law and order and national defence, and to oversee the economy and so on. The relationship should be an indirect one, with the church bringing moral pressure to bear upon the state and the state upholding freedom of religion. The Rev GUY A DAVIES Sturminster Newton, Dorset

### On track for confrontation

Sir: John Willcock's new mainly piece on Nicola Foulston, chief executive of Brands Hatch Leisure, (17 April) insults the British racing establishment and British racers.

Quite a few people felt that some of the money spent on Ms Foulston's cosmetic improvements should have been spent on improving the track itself. But then, they're "only in it for the sport" so their opinions are irrelevant.

Nicola Foulston didn't run up against a "wall of testosterone" because she was a woman taking on the "blazer-and-cravat-wearing male motor-racing establishment". Racers aren't sexist as a general rule – as even Barbara Cartland, who used to race Bentley's in the late Twenties, could tell you. She ran up against people who simply didn't like the cut of her jib – for very good reasons. PROSPER KEATING Paris



## analysis

# The sacred sites of Britain

Tomorrow sees the launch of a huge project to protect stone circles, ruined abbeys and sanctified sites around the world. Paul Valley expands on the definition of sacred and suggests some precious places of his own

Just to be on the safe side they took the statue and burned it publicly in Smithfield as if it were a living heretic. The object in question was the Black Virgin of Willesden which had apparently drifted miraculously up from the bottom of a holy well in the 12th century and had become the centre of a cult of healing and the focus of pilgrimage. At the Reformation the early English Protestants did not, of course, believe that the lump of wood possessed any supernatural powers, but it was best not to take any chances.

For the next 400 years the well remained sealed beneath the 10th century church of St Mary's in the north London suburb – though until 1902 the parish had to pay an annual fine of £1 6s 6d, originally imposed by Henry VIII, in penance for having ever given the statue name-room.

Tomorrow the Archbishop of Canterbury will visit the reopened well, with its new black Madonna, to bless the waters in the company of representatives of eight other faiths – from Baha'i to Taoist – in the launch of an international Sacred Land project which seeks to protect sanctified sites in more than nine different countries.

The enterprise is something of a success even before it begins. With a five-year budget in this country of £750,000 – backed by the Duke of Edinburgh and funded by the Worldwide Fund for Nature, the Pilkington Foundation and the Japanese organic agriculture giant MOA International

– it set out to sponsor 2,000 sites by the year 2000 but has adopted 700 already and is now aiming for 5,000 in the UK alone.

But in addition to the predictable stone circles, ruined abbeys, sacred groves, holy wells and old pilgrimage routes its organisers have decided – in pursuit of their claim that everyone in the country is within 10 miles of a sacred site – that they have to invent some new ones. "The creation of new sacred places, particularly in urban areas," is one of the project's bullet-point aims.

You might think they would have no trouble in finding icons of our modern secular idolatry.

How about a shrine at the shop where Noel Gallagher bought his music?

How about a shrine at the shop where Noel Gallagher bought his music?

Or the King's Road where Kate Moss and other queens of the catwalk were first spotted by fashion scouts? Or the square foot of turf at Sellhurst Park where Manchester United's David Beckham scored from the halfway line on the first day of the season? Or, for those who locate sanctity in the innocence of childhood, the bridge in Ashdown Forest where Pooh sticks were invented.

This is not quite what they have in mind. At the launch of the Sacred Land project in Scotland last week the main ceremony took place in the

town square in the ancient burgh of Wigtown, a depressed little place where unemployment is high, shops are boarded up and the town centre is empty.

Local worthy Andrew Patterson (a former clergyman and now an SNP councillor) spoke of the dereliction in the heart of the town since changes in agriculture forced the closure of its two creameries producing worse social indicators than urban problem areas like Toxteth.

The Lord Lieutenant, Major Edward Orr Ewing, read out a letter from Prince Philip underscoring the close relationship between religious and their attitude to conservation. And the project's guiding light, Martin

Palmer, insisted that in a place like this "it isn't enough just to do an urban redevelopment plan; if it's sacred we walk more gently and are God-guided in what we do to our surroundings".

All of which sounds a bit metaphysical for a fairly simple redesign of the gardens at the centre of the square and its adjoining market cross. What was sacred about that?

"We use sacred and special interchangeably," Palmer explains to quell my scepticism. The trouble is that while few would object to the project's three main aims – the protection of historic sites, wildlife conservation and urban regeneration – linking them together in situations which are in some cases rather tenuous is an invitation to all kinds of New Age guffery.

Palmer, who is director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture and religious adviser to Prince Philip, has a wide view of what makes a sacred space. "Places can be holy through association; the River Jordan is just a muddy little stream compared with the Tigris, Euphrates or Nile but something special happened there. Places can be hallowed by prayer like Canterbury, which has nothing physically significant but is a place to which people went to pray for centuries. Or they can be inherently sacred like the druidic Silent Pool near Gullford, the island of Iona or St Ninian's cave at Whithorn.

He has a point there. Whithorn has plenty of history. It is the site of the oldest monastery in the UK, on the Galloway peninsula where Christianity survived in an ancient form outside the jurisdiction of Roman Britain when that outpost of empire fell to the barbarian hordes. And it is living history. Its archaeologist, Peter Hill, has been only this month piecing together a new theory from a reinterpretation

of fourth-century stone inscriptions which suggest it may have survived as an outpost of Pelagian heretics. There, on a site which has been the focus of pilgrimage for 1600 years, Sacred Land is developing a Celtic monastic herbarium.

But it is half-an-hour's walk away, on the huge-pebbled foreshore of wide grey sea, that the true enchantment of Whithorn is to be found. At the Western extremity of the beach the eye is ineluctably drawn to the black mouth of the cave to which Ninian, the first bishop of the community, retreated for prayer. It stands at the foot of a huge gash in the rust-orange cliffside whose expense is broken only by the odd tenacious

fern and the pebbles placed in its crevices by pilgrims – pebbles which, thanks to the peculiar geology of the region, can be found with veins of intruded rock which form the shape of a cross. But its power comes from its isolation, from its uninterrupted vista of the horizon across which the sun rises, and from a silence broken only by the hiss of the waves drawing back across the stones and the cries of the kittiwakes that wheel overhead.

By the side of it the plans for Wigtown seem paltry. Andrew Patterson seeks refuge in theology, quoting Martin Luther's line "Where is God not?" This is, after all, a man who when he was a minister once told day-dreamers during one of his sermons that they would be "better in the pub thinking about



Places worth preserving: (clockwise from top) Abbey Road; St Alden's statue, Lindsfarne; the King's Road, Chelsea, haunt of the celebrity; and the hallowed Kop at Anfield

the church than to be in the church thinking about the pub". But if God is to be found everywhere why are people – the agnostic as well as the religious – so drawn to places like Ninian's Cave?

It is a Buddhist nun who supplies the answer. Despite her shaven head and her wine-coloured habit, she introduces herself in a rich Highland burr as Ani Lhamo, though she eventually reveals that her mother, after eight years as a nun, still calls her Edith. Her Tibetan lama, Yeshe Losal, from the Samye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Dumfries, had been speaking of another Sacred Land project – to build a Buddhist retreat centre on Holy Island, off Arran. He was drawn to the place by a "strong warm feeling" which he said emanated from a hermit, St Molaise, who had lived there in the 6th century. A place where a great person retrained their mind and became very pure, he explained, retains something of them after they have gone. "Ultimately everywhere is sacred," added Ani. "It's just

that we are so imperfect that we can't see it. So we needed to find a place like this, and each of us will need to find somewhere different."

Such sacred places, says Martin Palmer, are signs that people have been grappling for thousands of years with the religious quest – and they have an added importance for those who live in a secular world which dismisses such notions. "They are places where we encounter something powerful," says Palmer. "Today many people – including many in the Church – are afraid of powerful language. But we surrender our powerful places to New Agers and fancy dress specialists at our risk."

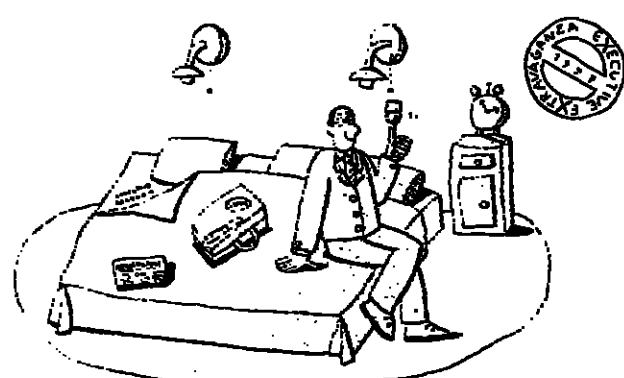
Yet it is precisely such romantic Aquarian nonsense that a project like Sacred Land is vulnerable. It is not helped by supporters who speak about "vibes and mega-vibes" or like the environmentalist David Belamy, who talks of the sacred in terms of a "tingle" and says sacred places must have "an aura of peace and tranquility, a sense of being safe". For the truly sacred must encompass not safety but attraction, dread and exhilaration beyond reason's grasp – what the ancients called the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

In the sacred is a sense of the unpredictable and the not-to-be-touched but also a sense of empowerment. It is a place which enables change and sends the affected individual out to affect change elsewhere. It is the opposite of safe. It is precisely the sense of "I am not like this" which seizes the individual awed by the view from a mountain top or even by the power of a work of art. If it is a place where the veil between heaven and earth is particularly thin it is so because it enables us to sense new possibilities, to break step with our mundane realities and envisage something which transcends them.

Of course the numinous is subjective. Which is why some will reasonably hold as a sacred spot the clock at Old Trafford which stands, stopped, at the time the club's team perished in the Munich air crash. For those whose youth was encapsulated in the music of Marc Bolan the tree into which his car crashed on Barnes common does that, and the rest of us should not mock.

For others it might be the Kop at Liverpool or the Abbey Road zebra crossing which interrupts the quotidian and opens that window into another world. Perhaps, even, it is not just metaphor to speak of the "hallowed wicker" at Lord's in homage of that game which the English, not being a spiritual people, invented in order to give themselves some conception of eternity.

But in Wigtown, by the market cross? Perhaps Andrew Patterson knows something the rest of us don't.



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## You can rely on 'Radio Times' to get it wrong

We in Britain like to have Aunt Sallys. We like to have convenient targets for our contempt. Comedians, especially, like to have convenient targets for contempt. They like to make jokes about mothers-in-law, and Scunthorpe, and British Rail sandwiches, and French plumbing, and Simon Dee...

But everything changes, even Aunt Sallys, though I didn't know this when I was a lad. When I was a lad, you could have predicted that British rail sandwiches would be laughed at for ever. "As limp as a British Rail sandwich." "Is he dead, Inspector?" "As dead as a British Rail ham sandwich, Sergeant." Phrases like this were thought to be funny enough never to die, and the men who made them could not have predicted that one day two amazing things would happen: one, that the sandwiches on railway trains would become very good, and two, that British Rail would cease to exist.

This, in itself, is not enough to stop the British treating British rail sandwiches as an Aunt Sally. The British love their Aunt Sallys so much that reality has very little impact on them. We still think that French lavatories

are primitive, despite the fact that the superloos which represent the cream of our sanitary sanctums are a French import. We still think that Scunthorpe is a byword for dullness, despite *Private Eye's* valiant effort to replace it with Neasden, and despite the fact that none of us has ever been to Scunthorpe. In the teeth of all the evidence, we still think that mothers-in-law are tyrants, and that Scotsmen are mean, and that trains are stopped by leaves on the line, that phones are plagued by crossed lines, that *The Guardian* is full of misprints.

That was an interesting Aunt Sally, the idea that *The Guardian* led the world in misprints, because it was a quite modern Aunt Sally, and quite localised, limited to middle-class media folk – not the sort of joke you'd hear made much outside London. But the perception that the paper was full of misprints was very widespread in the media milieu, partly because it was funny and because for a while it was true. I can remember a startling example of it in real life. Philip Hope-Wallace, a *Guardian* columnist, had a plaque unveiled to him in El Vino's wine bar in Fleet Street, above the chair where



Miles Kingston

so often sat. He was flattered but objected mildly to the management that they had spelt his name wrong on the plaque – Phillip instead of Philip.

"Impossible!" said the management. "Why, we even checked the spelling with *The Guardian*!" The myth was so widespread that *The Guardian* became wittily known as the "Gramiad". Whether because of this reputation or not, I do not know, but the paper is now pretty free from misprints and as well proof-read as any paper I know. This may be all right for *The Guardian*, but it is unfair on those of us who need an Aunt Sally for

misprints, a paper to which we can refer jocularly as a byword for spelling mistakes.

In the absence of any other candidate I would like to nominate the *Radio Times*. The immediate reason for this is personal, in that the RT recently spelt my name as Miles Kingston.

But this is not an isolated case. Stung by my own misfortune, I have started keeping a sharp eye on the *Radio Times* and have noticed some very odd errors in this once fine organ. Not so long ago they printed the name Harry Carpenter when they clearly meant Humphrey Carpenter. They referred to Reggie Nadelson as "he" when "he" is actually a woman. They brought us a film starring a man called Kevin Kline, though I think they actually meant Kevin Kline. And last week they told us that one of the guests on Radio 4's *The News Quiz* would be Francis Whelan. In fact, it turned out to be Francis Wheen. Wheen was on the programme again this week. But in the *Radio Times* he was listed as Francis Whelan yet again. The old "Gramiad" in its heyday would have been proud of getting the same name wrong two weeks running.

Even BBC announcers are being misled by the *Radio Times*. The other night there was an edition of *Jazz Notes* on Radio 3 at the usual barbarous time of 0030, which I listened to because I happened to be up late that night, and because it promised a review of recent records by the interesting musician Deirdre Cartwright. "In a few minutes we'll be getting Deirdre Cartwright's round-up of new records," said the announcer, before playing a short Satie piece to fill the gap. "Well," said presenter Digby Fairweather a few minutes later, "the *Radio Times* billing promised you a visit from Deirdre Cartwright, but we have had to postpone that because we are bringing you a concert from Birmingham."

So the *Radio Times* got it wrong. Fair enough. The *Radio Times* gets things wrong. What was amazing was that the Radio 3 announcer also got it wrong only two minutes before the programme and had no idea what was coming next. He must have been reading the *Radio Times*. A great error.

If you spot any misprints in the "Radio Times", they will find a good home in this column.

25 من الأصل



# A few tips if we take Cook's tour



A racing certainty for Foreign Secretary? Robin Cook with the television horse-racing pundit John McCrick

Photograph: Sporting Life

A reliable guide on the racecourse and pragmatic over Europe, the shadow Foreign Secretary is renowned for always doing his homework, says Donald Macintyre

John McCrick is on the stage of the night club at Livingston football club's stadium outside Edinburgh, smoking a torpedo-size cigar and doing his old friend Robin Cook proud: "I don't know how you do it Robin. It sickens me to my gut. I'm jealous. Just how do you do it?" This is high praise. Racing's most famous television personality isn't talking about Cook's parliamentary skills, or his dissection of the Scott report, or his ability to remain his own man in a party increasingly famous for its internal discipline. He's talking about Cook's talents as a racing tipster, on display each Saturday in Glasgow's *Herald*.

As one of the country's most unlikely celebrity converts to Labour, McCrick has come to the shadow Foreign Secretary's constituency to lead him his support. An old Harrovian of pronounced right-wing views, McCrick has been converted entirely by the affection he has for his fellow racing fanatic. This is odd, since Cook is unmistakably to the left of Tony Blair. McCrick explains over dinner, before the two men appear on a panel to discuss the following day's Scottish Grand National, that he has been particularly cheered by how "you ruled out a single currency in the next parliament". Never mind that Cook didn't quite do that.

At one point, even Cook looks a trifle anxious as McCrick suddenly risks the wrath of some members of his young audience by launching an extravagant denunciation of the Scottish National Party, the main challenger to Labour in Cook's Livingston constituency. "What party with the word 'national' in it has ever done anything for anyone? Look at them: the British National Party, the National Front, the National Socialists..." "What about the African National Congress?" asks a quick-witted young man. "The jury's still out on them," McCrick shouts back, unfazed.

The following day he will point out, in an interview with Cook on Channel Four's racing programme, that Cook's Grand National tip, *Sister Stephanie*, proved a lemon. She was 4-1 favourite but unseated

her jockey early in the race, losing *The Independent* £10 in the process. But Cook's other tips came home: *Sparky Gayle* in the 2.55 at Ayr, and in the 3.25 – how could he not have punted it? – *Shadow Leader*.

So we now know his interest in horses is taken seriously by the professionals. It started 15 years ago when he, his wife and his two children, surrounded by equestrians at their favourite holiday spot in the New Forest, decided that if you can't beat them, join them. You're as likely to see a picture of Cook on horseback in *Scottish Farmer* as his mugshot in *Tribune*.

And he hopes to keep his racing column after the election.

In Manchester on Friday, having completed a tiring TV interview on Labour's European policy, and with a plane to catch, he sat down with his *fax* guide in a BBC office for 20 minutes while Gary Titley, the local MEB, obligingly read out the *Ayr* results from Oxfax, lest Cook *miss* the error, unthinkable in Livingston, of referring to a horse that wasn't running.

Typical. Cook never neglects his homework. It is one reason he rarely makes gaffes. (In a tribute to one he did make – predicting that Labour would win big in breach of the "no complacency" edict – he is now given to announcing himself wickily

on the telephone to his old sparring partner thus: "Hello Mandelson, Landslide here.") He admits he is a bit of a swot, and can't resist mildly upbraiding a leading member of the Prestwich Jewish community for using an "oxymoron".

Cook clearly enjoys the rich picture of Britain a well-organised election tour gives

explaining all this in an interview with the *Bury Times*.

So how Euro-sceptic is the Shadow Cabinet's leading Euro-sceptic? His reservations – almost entirely on economic grounds – about the single currency, and its potentially deflationary implications, are deep and continuing. But on the European

He is baffled that anyone should think he would be a pushover among fellow foreign ministers

you. At a motorway cones factory in marginal Bury, he is delighted to find that 80 per cent of cones on the German Autobahn are made here. Dismissing that the Department of Trade had been forced to intervene to force the Germans to stop blocking imports of the cones, he said: "You see. That shows why a veto can be against British interests." If the Germans could not be overruled by majority voting to enforce the single market, the exports wouldn't even happen. Within minutes he is lucidly

Union generally, the picture is a little more complicated. On the one hand, Cook seems baffled that anyone should think that, with his pugilistic political reputation, he should be a pushover among his fellow foreign ministers. On the other, he is a pragmatist about getting the best out of Europe. Being Scottish may help: Scots can't, by definition, be little Englanders. He has restrained some of his more election-blinded colleagues from going even further down the Tory Europhobic road.

There is one further point. Last summer Cook pointed out at Chatham House that eight of the 15 EU states had governments led by sister social democratic parties. Far from joining Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl in a *ménage à trois*, a Labour government might prefer to put itself, as the EU's third big power, at the head of countries anxious to curb the dominance of the Franco-German axis. At the time that seemed a heresy. More recently Blair has been suggesting that his government might after all be an effective counterweight to Bonn. There is certainly no doubt that Blair consults him.

But abroad is for later. This is an election, and Cook is clearly a believer in the great Irish-American Tip O'Neill's famous dictum that "all politics is local". Given that he has a majority of 8,448, he takes remarkably good care of his constituency. This allegedly unclubbable man is gregariously at home here in a way he clearly isn't in the Commons tea room. In Broadburn – a ward which used to be in the old West Lothian constituency, represented by Jim Dalyell – Cook tells a story of which Tip O'Neill would have approved. One day the chairman of the Broadburn branch came down to Westminster for the first time and Dalyell introduced him to the then elderly Manny Shinwell, who

had held the seat in the early 1930s. Instead of reminiscing amiably with the local man, Shinwell rounded on him irascibly for his loss of the seat. "It was the Broadburn boxes which let me down in '35," the old man complained. "If Broadburn had voted for me, I would have been the MP. And if I'd been the MP, I would have become leader of the party instead of Ailes."

Is working-class support holding up in the Scottish heartland? One Labour councillor, out of Cook's earshot, says some people do say on the doorstep: "We'll vote for Robin Cook right enough but..." But what? That they're not so keen on Blair? "I didn't say that, you did," he replies. Cook himself dismisses the idea that traditional Labour supporters will defect to the SNP because the party is too right wing. They want the Tories out too much. Livingston provides a vivid sense of the two elections taking place: the Westminster, Europe-obsessed campaign, and the bread-and-butter one which is being waged on the doorstep. Cook has even been told by one councillor that his national profile was helpful when he was the health spokesman in 1992 but that "it doesn't make so much difference now you have been sidelined to doing Europe".

Sidelined he isn't. But how will Cook function in a Blair cabinet? He won't say so, but he is certainly conscious that his left-wing credentials are as useful to Blair as they are to him. Conversely, if there was a revolt by intellectuals and peasants against a Blair government that had failed to fulfil its promise, it isn't difficult to imagine Cook at its head. Whatever Cook really thinks about his old opponent, Gordon Brown's ultra-austere spending totals, he is a canny, grown-up politician. He is conscious of how in 1974 Labour spent first – and paid later. Cook at least shares Brown's belief that this is the wrong way round.

He still refuses, having been converted away from anti-devolutionism by the outcome of the 1983 election, to rule out the possibility of forsaking Westminster in the future and going to Edinburgh as a member of the Scottish parliament. He himself says it would be "presumptuous" to think he would be Scotland's prime minister if he did. He agrees that until he took his present job three years ago he wasn't a foreign affairs specialist. But no one would say since then – an authentic Cookism, this – "that I haven't applied myself to it".

The Foreign Office would give him, because of the central importance of Europe to domestic policy, an important entrée across the board of Cabinet policy-making. Sir John Coles, the Permanent Secretary, recently told him he had never known as crowded an international agenda as the UK faces over the next 18 months: the IGC in Amsterdam, the British EU and G7 presidencies, Hong Kong, EMU.

As Cook puts it: "It would be rather odd to be offered the world and say you'll have to go away and think about it."

## Powerful beyond words

**Andreas Whittam Smith**  
From Vietnam to Bosnia, Rwanda to China, it is the photojournalist who preserves the decisive moments of history

The study by two photographers, Tom Stoddart and Alastair Thain, of Sarajevo under siege provides the most effective exhibition of photojournalism I have ever seen. It can be found at the Royal Festival Hall, London, under the title *Edge of Madness*. The phrase is taken from General Ratko Mladic's exhortation to the Serbian forces looking down on the city from the surrounding hills: "Shoot at slow intervals until I order you to stop. Shoot them until they can't sleep. Don't stop until they are on the edge of madness."

At the show we do not actually see exploding shells and bloodshed, though they were ever-present during Sarajevo's 1,000-day ordeal. Instead the photographers have covered daily life during the siege. How people had to dodge bullets as they hunted for water, food and fuel, and even as they buried their dead. How Sarajevo's citizens kept going when their homes were shattered or they were disabled by war wounds.



The first draft of history: this picture of children running from a napalm attack on their village shocked the world and symbolised the horror of the Vietnam war  
Photograph: Nick UYAP

photojournalist of all, used to quote a phrase of Cardinal de Retz: "There is nothing in this world which does not have a decisive moment." For Cartier-Bresson the important thing was to choose from the flow of images which strike the eye and seize the telling one.

But in the time span in which the news photographer habitually works, there is a further, equally onerous requirement: to compose the picture, to work with what Cartier-Bresson called the rhythm of surfaces, of lines and of values.

He said it was putting one's head, one's eye and one's heart on the same axis. This gives the image its intensity, its emotional force.

The centre-piece of the exhibition is a series of pictures of people having to cross an important road in the middle of Sarajevo, a main artery of the city, which was riddled with sniper fire.

What do we see? A father running with an infant son in his arms, giving a rueful grin to the photographer as he passes, his

wife behind him, trying to keep up. Rushing the other way, a few frames later, is a young girl carrying what must be her favourite doll. There is the woman pushing a trolley-load of water containers in front of her as she hastens along. Water is heavy! You wonder whether she made it.

Two women cross the danger zone at a fast walk, arm in arm, the one resolute, the other trembling with uncontrollable fear. And a Bosnian soldier guides a blind man across the deadly street, both especially vulnerable, the soldier in his uniform, the blind man with his stick.

There are also two pictures which convey joy in the midst of tragedy. In one, a mother with both legs amputated squats on a low stool with her skirt tucked under her stumps, and cheerfully greets her young daughter eagerly running towards her. In the other a blind, deaf woman, raped during the war, holds her baby in her arms; both of them are ecstatically happy.

The show has an extra significance for me. It makes the case for photojournalism as an activity when it too is at the edge. As compared with the situation five years ago, there are far fewer newspapers and magazines interested in reportage. Partly this is because there are no great dramas which grip the imagination nowadays, as did the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, or student protest in China culminating with Tiananmen Square, or the ending of white rule in South Africa.

Tragic events in Afghanistan or Rwanda are only momentarily interesting. Moreover, in the minds of too many publishers and editors, photojournalism has become associated exclusively with grim black-and-white pictures, with death and destruction.

point of Cardinal Retz's remark about everything having a decisive moment.

The *Independent*, for example, has published some wonderful photographs from general election campaigns. Last week Mrs Thatcher went back to the very site where, 10 years ago, the newspaper photographed her walking alone across an area of derelict scrubland on Teesside, with her back to the camera, her black coat and handbag silhouetted against the long grass and weeds. It powerfully illustrated how Conservative economic policy was seen at the time.

Is that why the former Prime Minister returned, now that the site has been redeveloped? Photojournalism has such power. It conveys aspects of a story which words cannot reach. It speaks directly to the heart rather than to the head.

And it makes an essential contribution to what journalism is often said to be: the first rough draft of history. That is the meaning of the Sarajevo show.

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## Prospect of G7 intervention sends dollar into reverse

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

The currency markets went into reverse yesterday, sending the dollar lower and the German mark higher. The triggers were the possibility of official intervention to halt the dollar's two-year rise following next weekend's meeting of Group of Seven (G7) ministers, and the political uncertainty resulting from the prospect of early French elections.

Recent currency swings will be on the agenda at the G7 meeting due in Washington this weekend as both German and Japanese officials have indicated that they think the US currency has climbed far enough.

It has gained about 10 per cent against the mark and almost as much against the yen so far this year, despite an attempt by the G7 in February to talk it lower.

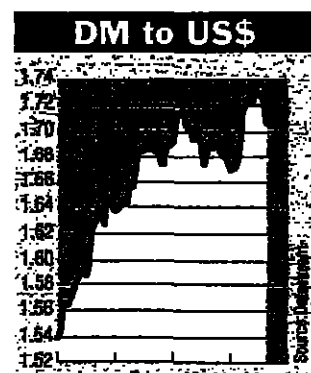
"We are interested in the mark remaining a strong currency," Hans Tietmeyer, Bundesbank President, said at the weekend. Yesterday Eisuke Sakakibara of Japan's Finance Ministry added his weight by warning that it would be dangerous to assume Japan would not raise interest rates to defend the yen.

The dollar was likely to remain weak ahead of the G7 meeting on Saturday, analysts said. The German currency was

also boosted by the news of early French elections. President Chirac's decision was interpreted as an admission that additional austerity measures will be needed if the government budget deficit is to be reduced by enough to meet the Maastricht target.

"It suggests the French government thinks there will be a need for more unpopular measures to cut spending," said Stephen King, an economist at James Capel.

New European Commission economic forecasts, due tomorrow, are expected to show France and Germany scraping under the 3 per cent of GDP ceiling. But the financial markets will take these with a pinch



of salt, given the Commission's relentlessly upbeat attitude to the single currency. Separate forecasts are expected to provide a more real-



istic assessment. The six leading economies institutes in Germany will today publish a report putting the 1997 budget deficit at just over 3 per cent of GDP.

The half-year economic outlook from the International Monetary Fund on Thursday is reported to be critical of the measures the Italian government has taken to trim its deficit, saying there has been less structural reform than necessary and too many one-off measures.

The result of all these factors has been one of the market's periodic reassessments of the likelihood of European monetary union going ahead on time. Every time the probability seems to recede a little, the mark gets a boost against other European currencies.

"Politics are creeping back in and this has turned around sentiment," said Michael Lewis

at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

The last effective G7 intervention to turn around currency trends came two years ago. At their meeting in April 1995, ministers agreed to halt the dollar's slide, and it subsequently climbed back from its post-war lows of \$79.75 and DM1.3693. It has gained more than 50 per cent against the yen and more than 25 per cent against the mark during the past two years.

"It is not clear that the Japanese should be unhappy about this because it has helped their exporters, but they want to be seen to be saying the right thing. It's a game of trade politics," said Nigel Richardson, an analyst at the Japanese bank Yamachi.

Although Japan's trade surplus fell in March, the politically sensitive bilateral surplus with the US rose by 11.2 per cent to \$379.83bn, the sixth monthly increase in a row.

Even so, the fact that the markets think that the dollar's current exchange rate against the yen is probably about right suggests that a G7 statement will not have a dramatic effect - any more than February's statement that the dollar's earlier misalignment had been corrected.

The dollar dipped from ¥125.85 to as low as ¥125.15 and from DM1.7113 to DM1.7020 in London yesterday. The pound fell nearly a pence to DM2.7831.

Andrew Regan and colleague pictured secretly meeting Co-op executive in a Buckinghamshire hotel car park

## Co-op threatens to call in SFO over offshore payment

Nigel Cope  
City Correspondent

The Co-op turned up the heat on Andrew Regan's Lanica Trust yesterday when it threatened to call in the Serious Fraud Office unless it received answers to several questions relating to a £2m payment to a Cayman Islands company.

The threat comes as Mr Regan prepares to deliver sensitive Co-op documents to the High Court today as he attempts to launch his £1.2bn bid for the whole society including the Co-op bank, the funeral parlours and the supermarkets.

In a letter sent to Mr Regan by Graham Melmoth, the CWS chief executive, Mr Melmoth casts doubt on Lanica's explanation that a £2m payment to Ronald Zimet of Trellis International in 1995 was made for assistance in negotiating an extension of a deal between the CWS and Hobson, a food company controlled by Mr Regan.

It says both Allan Green and David Chambers, the two suspended CWS managers responsible for the deal, have said they knew nothing about Trellis or Mr Zimet. They have told the CWS that negotiations between the two companies had been conducted directly with Mr Regan with no use of a middle man.

The letter states: "If the 'Trellis role' was fully disclosed at the time, presumably you will have no difficulty in telling me what [Mr Zimet's] role was, why you were prepared to pay in excess of £2m for it and who at the Co-op was told about it."

It closes: "These are simple and straightforward questions which call for simple and straightforward answers. If these do not reach us by close of business tomorrow [today] arrangements will be made to see representatives of the Serious Fraud Office."

SBC Warburg, Hobson's for-

mer financial adviser, cast further doubt on the validity of the payment yesterday. It issued a statement saying: "Contrary to recent press reports, SBC Warburg confirmed today that Swiss Bank Corporation did not 'clear' a payment made to Trellis International by Hobson plc in January 1995."

SBC said it was informed of the extension to the supply agreement in January 1995 "but not of the payment to Trellis". The bank said it was not informed about the payment until March of that year. It said it resigned as financial adviser to Hobson "shortly thereafter."

The Warburg statement contradicts a version made by the

These are simple and straightforward questions which call for simple answers - CWS

Regan camp at the weekend when it claimed Warburg had been aware of the payment and approved it. The bank said yesterday that it resigned shortly after learning about the payment.

Separately KPMG, the accountancy firm that was Hobson's auditors said it only signed off the company's accounts following assurances from both Mr Regan and his fellow director David Lyons, that everything was in order. It said that if that assurance had not been forthcoming it would have had to qualified the accounts.

The issue is complicated by the fact that some of the advisers who were working with Mr Regan at the time of the Hobson deal, are now representing

the CWS and vice versa. One adviser who worked on Mr Regan's affairs while at Swiss Bank is now representing the CWS at the merged SBC Warburg.

Another connection is that KPMG, former auditor to Hobson, is also auditor to the CWS. Furthermore it is KPMG that is working on the investigation of business dealings between Mr Green, Mr Chambers and Andrew Regan. KPMG also dismissed any suggestion of conflict of interests. "We don't believe that is the case. The forensic accounting team conducting the investigation is run out of Manchester. The audit team at Hobson was run out of London. The Chinese walls are in place."

SBC Warburg said it did not have details on who Trellis International or Mr Zimet were or what the payment was for. Though Mr Zimet has been described by the Lanica camp as a UK-based businessman, records filed at Companies House show he has no UK directorships.

As the bid battle became even more intense, CWS chairman Lennox Fyfe repeated that none of the society's assets were for sale. "I'm aware of what people in the society are saying. I haven't spoken to a single person who supports Mr Regan."

The display of a united front came as it emerged that Mr Regan has missed the deadline for calling a special meeting to discuss his proposals before the CWS on 17 May. The deadline passed on Friday.

Mr Regan is expected to comply with a court order demanding that he return sensitive Co-op documents to the court and say how they were planned to be used. If he can prove he is not using confidential information, Mr Regan is expected to go ahead with this audacious £1.2bn break-up bid for the CWS. It could come later this week.

Comment, page 21



Andrew Regan (top picture, right) and David Lyons, his right-hand man, shown on Sunday 13 April standing by Allan Green's Co-op registered Jaguar. Middle picture: Mr Lyons joins the Co-op's controller of retail operations and Mr Regan in the car, parked by the Bellhouse Hotel, Beaconsfield. Bottom: Mr Lyons about to depart 55 minutes later in his Porsche

## Group denies it bugged Regan

Control Risks, the security and surveillance group hired by the Co-op to help fend off the attentions of Andrew Regan, has denied that it bugged telephones in Mr Regan's home or attached monitoring devices to his wife's car, writes Nigel Cope.

"That is not the kind of thing we do," a spokesman said. "We would not undertake surveillance exercises ourselves, we would use some one else. But we did not hire anyone for this purpose either." The company said that if there was a bugging

operation, it would like to know who was responsible.

It is already known that the Co-operative Wholesale Society hired Control Risks for week with the arrangement ending last Friday. The work included filming Allan Green, the CWS former controller of retailing, handing documents to Andrew Regan in a Beaconsfield car park.

Founded in 1975 by four former SAS officers, Control Risks is one of the best known organisations in its field. It was

originally established to mediate in kidnappings and extortion and it still handles around 30 abduction cases per month. But its work has become more diverse recently and has included handling the security arrangements of the female competitors at the Wimbledon tennis championships.

Another key area of work is assisting companies that are operating or looking to operate in potentially difficult markets such as Russia. Control Risks has said that, during the Cold

War, companies used to pull out of Russia if there was a mafia connection. However, some organisations now feel that they cannot function properly without such a connection.

With a staff of 2,000 drawn from military, diplomatic, police and accounting backgrounds, the Control Risks board has included two former Metropolitan Police Commissioners. It has offices in 10 countries and claims to have worked for more than 3,400 clients in 120 countries.

Analysts said it was just one part of a series of recent positive announcements from GrandMet. "The market likes the continuing good news on the spirits front," said Geoff Collyer of NatWest Markets. "For the last five years all we have seen is downgrades in the spirits market, but that seems to have come to an end. A lot of people are expecting GrandMet's results in a few weeks' time to justify [that impression]."

Another analyst, who declined to be named, said: "Sentiment has been relatively positive and it is really just following through from that."

Shares in the Smirnoff vodka to Burger King group rose at one point to 509.5p - their highest since June 1992. At yesterday's high the stock was some 19 per cent above its lowest close of the year of 429p set on 15 January.

Last week Merrill Lynch repeated a "buy" recommendation on the stock, noting a longer-term chart objective of 650p, while other brokers have recently said that they favoured GrandMet over Allied Domecq.

In the 1990s the spirits division has reported growth of profits, volumes and investment in advertising faster than the competition. This is likely to enable GrandMet to outperform rivals over the next three years, analysts say.

Burger King, Pillsbury baked foods and TDV are outperforming their rivals, which has prompted a clutch of "buy" notes in past weeks.

CORDANT'S DECONSTRUCTED EMPIRE	
<b>BRANDS &amp; SAATCHI ADVERTISING WORLDWIDE</b>	Chief executive officer: Michael Burgey
Revenue: £360m	Main clients: Avis, B&W, Hyundai
Employees: 4,400	Main subsidiaries: Scholz & Friends (New York), Resonant Worldwide (New York), National Research Group (Los Angeles)
Chief executive officer: Bob Seelert	
Main clients: DuPont, Procter & Gamble, Toyota	
Main subsidiaries: Siegel & Gale (New York), The Facilities Group (London)	
<b>ZENTH MEDIA WORLDWIDE</b>	Revenue: (n/a)
Employees: (n/a)	
<b>BATES GROUP</b>	Chief executive officer: John Parfies
Revenue: £375m	Main clients: BMW, Bell Atlantic, Kingsthorpe
Employees: 5,200	

## Saatchi takeover fever as Cordiant splits

Terry Macalister

Takeover fever surrounded the Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency last night following the announcement of plans by parent, Cordiant, to break itself into two separately quoted companies.

Cordiant's share price rose 5.5p to 135.5p after Charlie Scott, chairman, said that he planned to "unlock the potential" of the media services company by floating Saatchi &

Saatchi and the Bates Group, its marketing business, in London and New York.

A third subsidiary, Zenith, would be independently managed but owned 50/50 by Bates and Saatchi. The Saatchi company will be run by Bob Seelert, Cordiant's chief executive.

Company insiders admit the demerger is a tacit acceptance that two bitter rival firms, brought together under one roof by the founding Saatchi brothers, cannot work together.

Mr Scott said the break-up would increase motivation among managers and open new areas of business, 10 per cent in the case of Bates, which had been closed by clients' conflict policies.

He added: "We believe demerger more closely aligns the interests of management with shareholders. The initial response from our major investors has been enthusiastic without exception."

But rivals said the company

had in effect hoisted a white flag over a business that had run out of ideas. One said: "We will all be putting the [acquisition] slide rule over these new companies."

Lorna Tibbani, media analyst with Panmure Gordon, agreed: "Bates will be a takeover target and Cordiant has realised that they can get more out of it that way than as part of the group or as a disposal."

This speculation was brushed aside by Mr Seelert, who said:

"Frankly we do not see it that way. Both are robust companies are perfectly capable of standing on their own." But he admitted pre-emption rights over Zenith had not been decided.

An extraordinary general meeting will be called in October to consider formal approval to Cordiant's demerger proposals.

If it is given the go-ahead, shares in the two companies could be listed in December. Investment column, page 22

STOCK MARKETS	
FTSE 100	4328.70 +18.20 +0.4
FTSE 250	4518.20 +0.50 +0.0
FTSE 350	2128.70 +7.20 +0.3
FTSE SmallCap	2285.65 -0.38 -0.0
FTSE All-Share	2098.91 +6.47 +0.3
New York	6712.89 +10.44 +0.2
Tokyo	1851.66 +189.52 +1.1
Hong Kong	12626.04 +84.88 +0.7
Frankfurt	3347.58 +3.19 +0.1

## INTEREST RATES

### Short sterling\*

Year	Rate (%)
1979	6.50
1980	6.75
1981	6.50
1982	6.75
1983	6.75

### UK medium gilt\*

Year	Rate (%)
1979	6.0
1980	6.5
1981	6.0
1982	6.5
1983	6.5

### US long bond

Year	Rate (%)
1979	6.0
1980	6.5
1981	6.0
1982	6.5
1983	6.5

\* 100 base interest contract

† Figures 1983 (200)

### Money Market Rates

Index	1 Month	1 Year
UK	8.03	8.97
US	5.59	8.28
Japan	0.53	0.75
Germany	3.09	3.38

\* Base money 1 indices




### Bond Yields \*

	Medium Bond (%)	% Age	Long Bond	(%) Age
UK	7.57	8.02	7.56	8.11
US	6.84	6.93	7.07	6.80
Japan	2.15	3.30		
Germany	5.89	6.38	6.88	

\* Base money 1 indices

## MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Kinds	Price (b)	Change (b)	Falls	Price (b)	Change (b)	% Change	
Bk of Scotland	339.5	14	4.3	Relevant Comms	88.5	7.5	7.8
Cardinal	135.5	5.5	4.2	Assoc Bt Ports	260.5	12	4.4
Horden							

CURRENCIES				
				
New York exchange rates and DM Brandt Day/Day for 1989 Index				
Pound				
Yesterday	Change	Year Ago		
\$ (London)	1.6348	+0.350	1.5177	
\$ (NY)	1.6360	+0.360	1.5170	
DM (London)	2.7829	-1.680	2.2851	
¥ (London)	205.217	-10.285	162.336	
\$ Index	99.5	-0.3	83.9	
Dollar				
Yesterday	Change	Year Ago		
£ (London)	0.6117	unch.	0.6589	
£ (NY)	0.6112	-0.11	0.6592	
DM (London)	1.7023	-1.390	1.5057	
¥ (London)	125.530	107.40	106.855	
\$ Index	105.4	unch.	96.4	
OTHER INDICATORS				
Yesterday	Day's chg.	Year Ago		
DM Brandt \$	18.20	+0.35	18.50	
Gold \$	342.55	+0.85	350.39	
S&P 500	329.55	-0.15	329.55	
Index				
Index	Latest	Yr Ago	Next Ftg.	
RPI	155.44	+2.6pc	150.9	15 May
GDP	109.17	+2.8pc	107.0	23 Apr

## MEPC moves to cut high interest costs

Magnus Grimond

MEPC, the property group which recently ended merger talks with rival Harumerson, yesterday took a further step towards putting its house in order by cutting the high interest costs taken on at the height of the 1990s boom.

Spurred by the appointment of James Dundas as finance director last month, the group has cancelled expensive interest rate swaps covering all its debt in a move which will result in an exceptional charge of £73m in this year's figures.

Despite a pledge by the company to hold the dividend at 20p for 1996-97, the shares fell 2p to 457p yesterday as analysts cut their net asset value forecasts by around 10p to 485p for the 12 months ending in September.

Unwinding the swaps will reduce the amount of fixed-rate debt on MEPC's balance sheet to 60 per cent and provide a "cap and collar" arrangement on another £200m. It is expected to save £19m in 1998, falling to £16m the following year, with continuing benefits up to the year 2010.

مكتبة من الأصل





COMMENT

You would be hard-pressed to find anyone willing to support another bout of empire-building in the industry. Advertising may be one of those businesses where to be small is to be beautiful.

# Go-it alone Cordiant rediscovers an old truth

How Lord Saatchi must be smiling to himself - that is if he has time to in between trips to Conservative Party Central Office, where he is advising the Prime Minister on election strategy and advertising. With its demerger announcement yesterday, Cordiant, Maurice Saatchi's former company, has all but run up the white flag, in effect admitting that it is unequal to the task of re-grouping and reinventing itself after the traumas of the last five years.

This is strongly denied by the present Cordiant chairman, Charlie Scott, who rightly points out that the group is achieving the targets it set itself at the time of its 1995 rights issue. None the less, it is hard to avoid the comparison with WPP, which after a period of vaulting ambition and hubris not dissimilar to that of the former Saatchi & Saatchi suffered the same near-nemesis. Unlike Lord Saatchi, however, its creator and guiding light, Martin Sorrell, managed to survive, if only by the skin of his teeth, and he has restored the advertising giant to rude health.

The same cannot be said of Cordiant, which has struggled to stay afloat since Lord Saatchi deserted ship, taking some of the company's best talent with him. Now it seems to be throwing in the towel altogether, the attempt to find a cohesive approach and culture in effect abandoned for good.

Lord Saatchi may be able to take some satisfaction in what has happened, but there should in fact be no shame or criticism attached to what Cordiant is doing. This is

the company's way of unburdening itself of its past, of finally drawing a line in the sand and putting its businesses on the right footing for the future.

Demergers most often take place in companies with starkly different businesses. It is unusual to see a company all of whose interests are in the same business splitting itself in two. But advertising is different, a people business made up of big egos and volatile temperaments encompassing a wide number of successful formulas, most of which don't mix terribly well.

In fact there are few advertising businesses organised as holding companies that manage to achieve a unified approach and culture. Certainly there is little value the holding company structure can add to the work its agencies are already doing on behalf of clients. In any case, Saatchi & Saatchi, Bates and Zenith always were very different sorts of company and they never lived happily together. Bates has found the association with Saatchi's positively restrictive, raising conflicts of interest that prevent it competing for an estimated 10 per cent of the world advertising market.

There is every reason to believe both Bates and Saatchi's will function better alone than together. But those who think it will also make them obvious takeover targets have perhaps forgotten the lessons of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The City may have forgiven Martin Sorrell for the spectacular loss of shareholder value he oversaw

in that period, but you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone willing to support another bout of empire-building in the advertising industry as we approach the millennium. Advertising may be one of those businesses where to be small is to be beautiful.

## Niceties butter no parsnips in forex

If exchange rates never misbehaved, what would the G7 ministers have left to argue about? Likewise, if the pound didn't interrupt its long-run decline with an appreciation from time to time, what would British exporters be able to blame for their mediocre performance?

The difficulty with exchange rates is that they never please all of the people all of the time. Whenever they move too far in one direction or another somebody is bound to kick up a fuss. There are three separate areas of fuss in the currency markets at the moment, but the paradox is that exchange rates are not far away from what economists would consider to be their equilibrium values. There are no serious misalignments.

Take the dollar versus the yen. The US currency has gained more than 50 per cent in value since hitting its post-war low in April 1995. The G7 meeting two years ago marked a successful turning point. Both the Japanese and Americans are indicating that they think the movement has gone far enough.

The US means it; if the dollar climbs even higher, American manufacturers will feel the pinch. It is perhaps surprising that they have not yet started to whine in any serious way. The US trade deficit - and especially the bilateral deficit with Japan - is uncomfortably big. It would be alarming if the strong dollar started to undermine exports.

The Japanese probably do not mean it. Yasuo Matsuoka, Governor of the Bank of Japan, made it clear in a speech at the end of last week that the authorities are depending on rapid export gains to sustain the virtuous circle of growth in the limping Japanese economy. Interest rates can't go any lower. The government has to start correcting its huge budget deficit, so taxes are due to rise. A weaker yen is the only weapon left in Japan's armoury.

Japan still feels compelled to make the right noises about halting the yen's fall. But political niceties will butter no parsnips in the foreign exchange markets. Investors will look at the relative strengths of the two economies - the contrast could hardly be greater - and at interest rate prospects. If the authorities tried intervention in these circumstances it would flop. The market is right on this front.

A second aspect of currency tensions is the outlook for EMU. The investing herd has a simple rule of thumb here. Whenever the single currency looks less probable, buy German marks, and vice versa. As the political heat builds up during the next year, there will

be several waves of sentiment back and forth.

Beneath these waves, most of the currencies within the exchange rate mechanism will remain as stable as they have for the past five years. The exception, the lira, will be vulnerable to bigger movements unless Italy delivers economic reforms and budget proposals the market finds genuinely credible. That leaves sterling. There are two contradictory views about the pound's recent advance. You can either believe that it represents a fundamental improvement in the British economy - an improvement based partly on the performance of all those exporters now complaining the loudest about the strong pound.

Or you can opt for the view that it is a temporary gain linked to the dollar and the present mini-boom. On balance the latter case seems more probable. So if you are taking your holiday abroad this summer, this is perhaps the time to be buying your currency.

## Some don't like it hot

It's a bit rich of Andrew Regan to complain about the surveillance operation mounted by the CWS against him and his family. This is the man who has prevailed upon senior CWS executives to act in a grossly disloyal way to their organisation. If he can't stand the heat, he should never have entered the kitchen.

# Sellers lose out as Alliance shares climb

Clifford German

The 640,000 investors who chose to sell their shares in Alliance & Leicester last week lost out yesterday, with the price climbing to 571.5p at one stage during the company's debut on the stock market. Some 27 per cent of the 2.3 million people who received free

## Auction of A&L shares

Price	No of shares bid for	No of bidders
546	730,000	1
536	755,000	2
532	500,000	1
531	3,000,000	2
530	5,000	1
527	1,000,000	1
526	2,015,000	3
522	20,220,000	4
521	6,140,000	4
520	7,455,000	10
519	255,000	2
518	4,150,000	2
517	6,136,666	2

Average bid price: 522.08p, with shares bid for: 52,361,967. Number of bidders: 36.

shares decided to sell through an auction conducted by Cazenove.

The shares in the reconstituted bank eventually closed at 566.5p yesterday, valuing the 250 free shares received by all of the former building society's members at £1.416.

The closing price values the new bank at £3.3bn. The £1.416 windfall for the 1.5 million in-

vestors who have retained their stakes is considerably more than the £1,000 forecast by the bank's advisers last October.

The result of the first of three auctions held among institutions, which was held on Friday, was published yesterday. The average price achieved was 522p, the highest was 546p and the lowest 517p. There were 36 bids for a total of 52 million shares. The second auction was held last night, and the final round of bidding will be held late this afternoon.

Dealings opened yesterday at 545p, well above the middle price of 521p forecast by the City bookmakers, IG Index, at the close of business last Friday. A&L shares were easily the most active stock traded and by the close of business an estimated 70 million shares had been traded, including the 52 million sold by auction to institutions last Friday night.

Those who voted to sell their shares through stockbrokers Cazenove will have to wait until the start of trading on Wednesday morning before they know how much they will receive for their shares. They will get the average of the prices realised at the three auctions. The average price of last night's auction will be made known this morning.

The relatively low turnover yesterday excluding the shares auctioned last Friday suggests that the institutions were prepared to wait and see whether the shares could be bought cheaper. But if prices start high-



Going up: The share price suggests that Richard Pym, A&L managing director, might face a bid. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

er again this morning, some dealers said it could trigger a surge in demand from institutions who will eventually need to hold up to half the total issue after it becomes a constituent of the FTSE 100 share index.

The surge in the share price yesterday took most of the City institutions by surprise and opinion is now divided whether it is sustainable. Last night's

price values the shares at 13.9 times historic earnings and implies a yield of 3.6 per cent gross on the notional dividend the directors would have paid for last year. On the same basis its nearest rival, Abbey National, is trading at 14.4 times earnings and yields 4 per cent gross.

But John Leonard, banking analyst at Salomon brothers, claimed the proper price based

on fundamentals should be 480p-500p and the market price implied a strong expectation of a bid for the new bank or an early move to return surplus capital to shareholders.

If the market price is maintained it may have widespread implications for the value of shares in the Halifax, Woolwich and Northern Rock building societies and for Norwich

Union, all of which are converting to public companies in the next three months. If larger numbers of shareholders now decide to hold on to their shares in these conversions in anticipation of a bigger profit by waiting, it could force institutions to bid prices up to secure the shares they need to comply with their investment rules. Market report, page 23

## IN BRIEF

### Record £250,000 fine for City Equities

City Equities, the London-based share dealer, has been fined a record £250,000 by Fimbra, the investment watchdog, for misinforming clients on the risks of trading in so-called "penny shares". The firm was also ordered to pay the £30,906 costs of the Fimbra inquiry. City Equities admitted charges that it did not explain the risks of investing in penny shares, that it made unsolicited calls to try to conclude deals over the phone and that it failed to establish whether its recommendations suited clients. Fimbra also found that City Equities failed to keep proper records or maintain staff supervision procedures.

### Traffic dips at East Midlands Airport

Passenger numbers at East Midlands Airport, owned by National Express, fell by 281,000 in the first quarter of 1997, a drop of 4.7 per cent on the same period last year. The period is EMA's least busy quarter and the passenger numbers were the second highest in the first quarter in EMA's history. The company said the figures reflected a national picture of reduced charter and inclusive tour traffic in summer 1996 and the 1996/97 winter programmes. The outlook for 1997 as a whole was more encouraging.

### Industry's £12bn sickness bill

Sickness absence cost industry £12bn last year following the loss of 187 million working days, a Confederation of Industry survey showed. The survey of almost 700 companies found there was an average cost of £533 for every worker off sick. Workers took an average of 8.4 days off sick last year, half a day more than in 1994 when the last survey was conducted by the CBI. The cost of sickness has jumped from £10bn in 1994 following a rise in the number of days taken off by non-manual workers from 6.1 to 7.9. Absence rates among manual employees have remained at 9.7 days a year, with part-timers taking off eight days a year. Most of the time off was because of illness, although another significant reason was family responsibilities.

### Premier Farnell under pressure

The continued strength of sterling knocked around £6m off annual profits at Premier Farnell, the world's biggest catalogue distributor of electronic bits and pieces. Howard Poulson, chief executive, said: "In terms of translation, one cent is equivalent to \$1m of profits." However, he said that the biggest impact on last year's profits, which failed to meet expectations with a rise from an underlying £110.8m to £137m before tax, came from weak conditions in the volume distribution market. Investment Column, page 22

## Sainsbury bank off to flying start

Chris Hughes

Sainsbury's fledgling bank is attracting more than 10,000 customers a week which, the company said, was ahead of expectations. Analysts were less surprised and said Sainsbury might find it hard to maintain the momentum.

"It's a very promising start, but it's only a start," said Simon Samuels, banking analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson. "Sainsbury has been picking the low-hanging fruit straight away. But I suspect it was pleasantly surprised by the take-up, as Tesco and Prudential have also entered the market for deposits."

Sainsbury's Bank, 55 per cent owned by Sainsbury and 45 per cent by the Bank of Scotland, attracted more than 100,000 customers who have deposited £100m since it opened eight weeks ago. Its 10,000 new customers a week compares with 12,000 a month for First Direct, traditionally the fastest-growing bank in the UK. Tesco's bank, attracted 190,000 customers in its first eight months. Sainsbury's offers two accounts and two credit cards. Its instant Access Savings account, which offers 5.75 per cent interest on balances over £1, has been the most popular product. Sainsbury had benefited from a receptive customer base and a market-leading interest rate, Mr Samuels said. "It's a stonking rate of interest. But it's not clear whether Sainsbury can maintain it across an entire product range."

# Leap in price of houses biggest in 20 years

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

House prices are at their most buoyant for two decades, according to a new survey. The impending general election had not dented the housing market, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors said yesterday.

Its regular survey of estate agents showed more than a tenth reporting that house prices have climbed by more than 5 per cent in the past three months - the only time apart from 1988 that the response has been this strong in the 20 years since the survey began.

The housing recovery would continue, the institute predicted, thanks to the tax cuts and windfalls of free building society shares. Ian Perry, a spokesman, said: "Combined with a marked rise in the number of valuations being carried out, this means we can look forward to more property coming on to the market."

However, the recovery has been uneven. London, the south-east and West Midlands account for the upbeat results. A net balance of 90 per cent of the respondents in London said they had seen prices increase, followed by 87 per cent in the South-east.

At the other extreme, the positive balance was only 15 per cent in the East Midlands, and 33 per cent in Yorkshire and Humberside.

This could not be described as a national housing boom, the survey observed. Apart from anything else, the number of transactions is running at an annual rate of about 1.3 million against 2.2 million in 1988.

Even so, Mr Perry said, "The housing market seems to be immune to the election." Predictions of an increase in interest rates in May and of the possi-

ble phasing out of tax relief on mortgage interest had not had any appreciable effect.

House prices remain the clearest signal of the strength of the housing market. Other recent figures have pointed to a cooling off in the pace of activity in the past two or three months. For example, banks and building societies reported a slight decline in new mortgage lending last month. The number of loans approved by building societies returned to the same level as a year ago after picking up sharply last autumn.

The mixed signals mean economists are divided in their views about the underlying health of the housing market. Simon Briscoe of investment bank Nikko predicts there will be no boom "this side of the millennium". Others say that, although talk of boom is exaggerated, house price rises this year could be in double digits.

## Sears to decide on Freemans

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

Sears, the retailing group, looks set to decide by the end of this week whether to try to agree a deal to sell its Freemans home shopping business to Littlewoods, subject to the result of a fresh investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC).

An exclusivity clause giving Littlewoods sole rights to negotiate a purchase is understood to run out tomorrow, the day before Sears Executive board, led by embattled chief executive Liam Strong, meets to decide on the proposal. Sears is thought likely to give more details on the sale with its financial results announcement next week.

The Government yesterday called a second MMC investigation into the planned Littlewoods purchase of Freemans. The previous investigation was halted after Sears abandoned the negotiations. The MMC has to report its findings by 21 July.

However, the Department of Trade and Industry cleared a potential takeover by N Brown, the Manchester-based home shopping company which pulled out of talks to buy Freemans last month. One sugges-

tion last night was that N Brown may seek to re-open talks to buy the business at a lower price while Sears is waiting for the outcome of the MMC review on the Littlewoods acquisition.

It also emerged yesterday that attempts by Boots, the retailing group, to make an offer for several of Littlewood's high street stores had been rebuffed. Littlewoods has insisted it will only sell the stores together.

Boots declined to comment on speculation. But it is thought to have expressed an interest in turning 15 of Littlewoods outlets into Boots branches, out of the 135 shops on the market.

## National Provident Institution Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the 161st Annual General Meeting of Members of National Provident Institution will be held at the City Conference Centre, 76 Mark Lane, London EC3R 7JN, on Wednesday, 21 May 1997, at 12.00 noon, for the transaction of the following ordinary business:

- Resolution No.1 To receive and adopt the Accounts and Report of the Directors for the year ended 31 December 1996;
- Resolution No.2 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr K Jones, who has joined the Board since the last Annual General Meeting;
- Resolution No.3 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr A D Lyons, who has joined the Board since the last Annual General Meeting;
- Resolution No.4 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr P W L Morgan, who is retiring by rotation;
- Resolution No.5 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr B J Brindley, who is retiring by rotation;
- Resolution No.6 To re-appoint as a Director, Lord Camoys, who is retiring by rotation;
- Resolution No.7 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr K H McBrien, who is retiring by rotation; (Mr Morgan and Lord Camoys are members of the Remuneration Committee)
- Resolution No.8 To re-appoint Coopers & Lybrand as Auditors and to authorise the Directors to determine their remuneration.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD: Steven O'Brien, Company Secretary, Principal Office: National Provident House, 55 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2UE.

NOTE: A Member entitled to attend and vote at the general meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and, on a poll, to vote instead of him or her. A proxy need not be a Member of NPI. Proxy forms are available on request from the Company Secretary at the Principal Office. Completed proxy forms must be deposited at the Principal Office not later than 12 noon on 19 May 1997.



PROVIDING PENSIONS SINCE 1835

If you would like a copy of NPI's Report and Accounts 1996, write to Steven O'Brien, Box 101, NPI, National Provident House, 55 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2UE.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode \_\_\_\_\_







# market report / shares

## Alliance & Leicester debut leaves financials on high

MARKET REPORT  
DEREK PAIN  
stock market reporter of the year

Data Bank	
FTSE 100	4328.7 +18.2
FTSE 250	4518.2 +0.5
FTSE 350	4128.7 +7.2
SEAQ VOLUME	695.6m shares
Gifts Index	94.12 -0.03
Share spotlight	
Shares price, pence	
Alcohol	100
Bank	100
Chemical	100
Food	100
Health	100
IT	100
Media	100
Oil	100
Pharmaceutical	100
Real Estate	100
Retail	100
Telecom	100
Utilities	100
Vehicle	100

Alliance & Leicester dominated the stock market. First-time dealings in the building society-come-bank inspired other banking shares and were, therefore, a major factor in an upbeat Footsie display.

From the moment the first transaction was recorded there was a continuous flow of deals, most small and, somewhat surprisingly, mainly balanced towards buying. The message that, for technical reasons, financials were the shares to back in this election year has clearly captured the imagination of private investors.

The first deal on City screens was the Cazenove Friday evening auction when the stockbroker sold 52.36 million shares at an average price of 522p.

Within seconds it was clear the buying institutions had got a bargain and the former building society members who allowed their shares to be

packaged for auction could, with a little patience and sophistication, have been "smarter investors" and got a better price.

The deal following the Caz notification was for 9,100 shares at 545p. And that set the pattern for the day's trading, except that hundreds of deals in hundreds of shares went through.

The Caz auction was punched into the system as a single trade. Under normal reporting procedures it would have been entered at least twice so the Seaq volume, put at 88.88 million, should have been over 140 million, or more than one fifth of the day's turnover.

Alliance peaked at 576p, closing at 566.5p, a level which exceeded market expectations. It is, with institutions still short of Alliance, still possible that the so-called price bubble was exaggerating interest. But with Alliance attracting take-

over talk there is a suspicion the shares have farther to run.

The rest of the money sector basked in the Alliance glow with many institutions reviewing their financial exposure. The feeling is that those which have not already done so will expand their overall financial portfolio to adjust for the building society conversions.

Abbey National, the trend setter for the converters, gained 14p to 812.5p, a peak Barclays rose 18.5p to 1,026.5p and National Westminster Bank, which had the added spur of favourable comment from Fox-Pitt, Kelton, a stockbroker specialising in financial shares, 18.5p to 697p.

Bank of Scotland, figures this week, improved 14p to 339.5p.

Footsie ended 18.2 points higher at 4,328.7. But for Alliance it would have been a downbeat session.

BT, up 7p to 451.5p, was the most actively traded share after Alliance, reflecting its Spanish deal and expectations of its digital TV venture with BSkyB. Support from ABN Amro Hoare Govett, signalling a 465p target, and Goldman Sachs was also a factor.

Reed International, in its ex-dividend form, rose 7p to 1,131.5p on talk its Dutch partner is planning a Nasdaq presence. Another Anglo-Dutch

constituent, Unilever, was fattened by Morgan Stanley support, up 15.5p to 1,594p. The shares also responded to reports that at least three international groups, Akzo Nobel, DuPont and Imperial Chemical Industries, were bidding for its unwanted chemical side.

Bass was flat with Lehman Brothers caution trimming the shares 5p to 790.5p.

Reckitt & Colman, the household goods group, put on 7p to 807.5p on NatWest Securities support. The same investment house made positive noises about Somerfield, the supermarket chain which made such a hesitant debut last year. At one time the shares were due to be floated at 190p; they eventually arrived at a cut price 145p. The price closed at 180.5p, off 1p.

Cardinal's break-up decision gave the shares a 5.5p uplift to 135.5p.

Late selling lowered Associated British Ports 12p to 260.5p and Symonds, the electrical group, suffered the indignity of further profit discomfort, off 9p to 38p.

Raine, the building group, bowed to market speculation and said it was in talks which could lead to a bid. It said any offer would be a share exchange worth 19.5p. There is, however, a feeling in some quarters another offer is being prepared. Shield Diagnostic fell 6p to 497.5p with some observers unimpressed by director share sales at 530p - the same price at which the company raised £2.9m last week.

RJB Mining, off 20.5p to 412.5p, was hit by indications PowerGen had signed with overseas coal producers. PowerGen rose 7.5p to 649p.

The strong pound continued to take its toll, clipping EMI 14.5p to 1,176.5p and British Steel 1.75p to 146.5p.

Alcoholic Beverages	Banks	Chemicals	Food	Health	IT	Media	Oil	Pharmaceutical	Real Estate	Retail	Telecom	Utilities	Vehicle
Alcohol	Bank	Chemical	Food	Health	IT	Media	Oil	Pharmaceutical	Real Estate	Retail	Telecom	Utilities	Vehicle
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## business

# East Asia's dazzling growth is about to run into trouble

When does the great East Asian run of growth begin to taper off? The region has, over the last 20 years, been the fastest-growing in the world by a large margin, with the result that some parts - Hong Kong and Singapore for example - now have a higher per capita GDP than the OECD average. At some stage, however, this growth is bound to slow. Some countries have been doubling their per capita income every 10 years, something that took the UK and US more than 50 years at a similar stage of their growth, and a rate of growth that mathematically cannot continue.

You can see the slowing growth pattern in the region's richest country, Japan, or for that matter in Europe's richest, Switzerland. Both countries have hit a glass ceiling. But what will be the pattern for the rest of the region, if indeed there is a single pattern?

The question is really a long-term one, but arises this week for a couple of reasons. First, the Merrill Lynch Global survey of fund managers' investment intentions has been becoming increasingly sceptical. You can see that in the graph on the left: the figures show that the world's fund managers are only just net buyers of the Pacific Basin region. True, the region is rather wider than just East Asia, but it does square with a downgrading of that region too.

The other reason is the growing evidence that, while an economic recovery is under way in the region, it is a patchy and uneven one. The East Asian economy is driven by exports to the US and Western Europe to an extraordinary extent. For example, exports to the US alone account for one-third of Singapore's GDP and one-quarter of Hong Kong's. So a pause in growth in the OECD region in the second half of 1995 and most of last year hit these countries hard.

There is now a clear recovery in exports, as the graph on the right from J P Morgan shows, but



Hamish McRae

There are substantial risks in the future. One is the dependence on exports of a very narrow range of products

This is patchy. Some countries - China, the Philippines, Taiwan - are doing well; others - Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia - are doing less well.

Assuming the US economy continues to grow and there is a more secure recovery in Western Europe, eventually the whole region's growth will stage a decent cyclical recovery. On a longer view, though, it is at least plausible that the East Asia's high

growth era is over. This possibility has been outlined in a new paper by David Hale, the economist at Zurich Kemper Investments in Chicago.

Hale's thesis runs like this. The region's growth has been dazzling. But there are substantial risks in the future. One is the dependence not just on exports, as noted above, but on a exports of a very narrow range of products. The electronics sector accounts for 51 per cent of Singapore's exports, 44 per cent of Malaysia's, 34 per cent of South Korea's. No less than 20 per cent of South Korea's exports are semiconductor chips.

This leaves these countries vulnerable not just to a fall in demand but also a fall in prices. One of the main reasons for a sharp rise in Korea's current account deficit last year was the 75 per cent fall in the price of chips as a result of a global glut. A second area of vulnerability is the need for massive infrastructure investment. The need for such investment has been one of the reasons why, despite very high personal savings, the region is in overall current account deficit. While this is probably manageable without a Latin American-style meltdown, it means that the region does carry risks.

This leads to a third concern: the ability of the region to manage this infrastructure investment wisely, given that it will probably have to pay above-average rates

of return to attract inward capital to finance it.

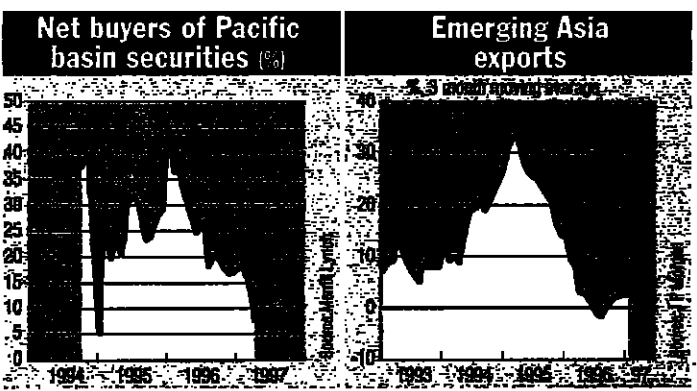
There are concerns, too, as to whether the commercial management of local companies will be sensitive to the changing demand for their products - whether, for example, Chinese companies will be inhibited by government interference.

The region has little experience of shareholder scrutiny, a weakness which may have led to the very low rates of return achieved by Japanese companies. It also has very little experience of using financial markets to allocate capital, something which will have to happen to a much larger extent in future, particularly as an ageing population will within one generation need to accumulate sufficient financial assets to cover its pension needs.

Finally, the region will need to import very large amounts of energy and probably food too. China, for example, will become a large oil importer as its car population grows.

The point here is not to argue that the region is in serious economic trouble. Rather it is to point to reasons why its growth in the future is liable to hit problems, which will have to be tackled. If these are dealt with successfully, then the debate will shift from economics to politics, and the role of the region in the wider world. David Hale believes that these countries will succeed and regain growth momentum in the final years of the century, and he may well be right. But it will not be the astonishingly rapid growth of the last two decades and there will be bumps on the way.

Maybe the main bumps will not be economic at all but political. Best candidate? Well, you can round up the usual suspects. The unification of the two Koreas cannot be that far off, but can it be achieved with the smoothness of the unification of the two Germans? Hong Kong has to demonstrate that its economy can continue to prosper under a change of regime. And after Hong Kong, what happens to Taiwan?



## Budgie the Helicopter flies into a \$22m wrangle

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

The Duchess of York's creation, Budgie the Little Helicopter, flew into turbulence yesterday as the American marketing agents for the cuddly TV series issued a blood-curdling statement and a demand for \$22m from its British owners, Sleepy Kids.

The row goes back to last spring, when Lanney Hachmann & Harris went into Chapter 11, thus prompting Sleepy Kids to look for a new agent in the US. LHH yesterday issued a blistering assault on Sleepy Kids, saying that statements the British company made in 21 October were "improper".

LHH says Sleepy Kids should not have pinned the blame on it for Budgie's non-performance in the US, that its agency contract was not terminated, and that it was still owed \$22m.

No one from Sleepy Kids was available for comment yesterday, but the bluster from LHH certainly didn't disturb the stock market. Sleepy Kids shares rose 0.5p to 17.5p. Kergie can sleep safely in her four poster for the moment.

Not many editors who are sacked from newspapers then launch a magazine from the same building. Anil Bhoyral was sacked as editor of *Sunday Business* in February in acrimonious circumstances, yet is about to relaunch *Business Age* magazine from the office block that houses the former organ, just off London's Oxford Street.

Anil was sacked by SB's owner Luke Johnson, son of right-wing columnist Paul Johnson. However, Tom Rubythorn, who founded SB and is another ex-editor, owns the lease to the building, and is happy to rent space to his old colleague. "We have a separate door," says Anil. "After I was sacked from *Sunday Business*, I talked to a number of people who had been considering buying into the paper, and they were keen on backing the relaunch of *Business Age* instead."

"We're aiming for a launch sometime in late May, with a circulation of around 50,000. It'll be a 164-page glossy with lots of entertaining controversy. Our first issue will name a well known



Kids' stuff: The Duchess of York is unlikely to be worried

businessman as a crook. We'll probably get sued for it - we've budgeted for that," says Anil.

Tom Rubythorn and Anil used to run *Business Age* until it was bought a couple of years ago by VNU, who changed its format and then closed it down. Anil bought back the title this spring and has recruited *Sunday Business*'s sales director Charlie Kerr and design director Trudi Roche - who also used to work on the old *Business Age*. Whether anyone will make any money out of this musical chairs is another story.

Ian Shay resigned yesterday as finance director of Coda Group, the loss-making accounting software supplier. A spokesman for Coda said that the group had redirected the bulk of its operations to the US, and more international skills were now needed. "Mr Shay felt he would be better off elsewhere," said the spokesman.

Robert Brown, Coda's chief executive, moved to the East Coast from the UK last year in order to spearhead the group's recovery. "The thinking is that if Coda is going to make it internationally as a supplier of accounting software, then it has to make it in the world's biggest software market," says the spokesman. Meanwhile the search for a new finance director goes on.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants' attempt at a television programme may have sunk in a sea of red ink, but that has not put off the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), which is now launching its own video service, the Finance Channel.

In the book-keeping equivalent of Red Hot Dutch, the Channel will feature five "modern, lively magazine-style programmes" each month "designed to help accountants in business respond to and forecast business change". I can feel my eyelids getting heavier already.

The channel will be produced at Television Education Network's studios at Channel 4 and will cost a wallet-denuding £82 a month.

Hepworth, the building materials company, says that its chief executive, John Carter, has resigned "for personal reasons". A spokesman says Mr Carter's departure was amicable and based on mutual agreement, and that the former chief executive was leaving to pursue other interests. Mr Carter is 51 and has been chief executive at Hepworth for five years, having joined the company in 1987. The spokesman denied there was any rupture over strategy or disagreement behind the news. The group has started its search for a replacement.

Mr Carter's resignation comes just ahead of a changeover of the chairmanship, with Jeremy Lancaster due to take over as chairman from Sir Roland Smith.

John Willcock

### Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	183.46	7.5	24.21	1000	105.75		
Canada	22.38	61.96	170.12	13971	29.26		
Germany	27.25	70.43	207.96	17023	30.31		
France	33.89	22.21	67.44	13.67	30.31		
Italy	27.63	26.42	71.94	1818	26.53		
Spain	16.52	20.20	58.20	62.50	17.13		
EU	14.59	24.20	72.14	14.38	11.72		
Belgium	57.47	5.10	42.35	35.40	20.17		
Netherlands	30.92	20.40	64.30	64.82	29.57		
Norway	11.52	20.13	70.70	191.75	39.57		
Sweden	23.25	23.13	61.01	14.31	80.83		
Switzerland	12.67	22.10	64.30	72.45	41.16		
Australia	2.38	20.13	70.70	191.75	39.57		
Hong Kong	12.68	27.36	84.18	72.75	2.0		
Malaysia	4.08	27.36	84.18	72.75	2.0		
New Zealand	2.38	20.13	70.70	191.75	39.57		
Saudi Arabia	6.31	0.0	0.0	14.42	22.24		
Singapore	2.35	0.0	0.0	14.42	22.24		

### Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16351	0.9999	Nigeria	128.491	85.0000
Austria	13.9554	11.8000	Oman	10.2596	0.3500
Brazil	17.73	10.025	Pakistan	85.5427	40.0000
China	8.2645	8.2948	Philippines	43.4245	26.3500
Cyprus	3.5585	3.4000	Portugal	20.9047	14.0000
Egypt	5.692	5.6949	Russia	5.692	5.6949
Ghana	310.57	300.000	South Africa	5.692	5.6949
Greece	4.442	4.442	Taiwan	4.442	4.442
India	56.432	57.0000	Thailand	4.442	4.442
Israel	0.4971	0.5040	UAE	6.0005	3.6700

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; low to high are at a premium.  
- Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.  
For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0800 128 3033.  
Calls cost 50p per minute.

### Interest Rates

UK	600%	Germany	2.50%	US	5.75%	Japan	0.50%
Base Rate	3.5%	Discount	4.00%	Prime	5.00%	Discount	2.50%
Intervention	3.5%	Canada	4.75%	Fed Funds	5.25%	Central	5.00%
Discount	7.5%	Denmark	4.00%	10-Day Repo	5.75%	Switzerland	3.00%
Netherlands	2.70%	Denmark	3.25%	Repo (Avg)	4.00%	London	4.25%

### Bond Yields

Country	10yr	10yr	10yr	10yr	10yr	10yr	10yr
UK	7.0%	7.2%	7.25%	7.28	Netherlands	2.5%	4.50
US	6.00%	6.75	6.75	6.84	Spain	7.00%	4.50
Italy	5.50%	1.50	2.25	2.31	Italy	6.25%	7.18
Japan	5.50%	1.50	2.25	2.31	Japan	5.00%	4.25
Australia	10.0%	7.40	6.75%	7.28	Belgium	8.0%	4.50
Germany	5.0%	4.00	5.00%	5.98	Sweden	13.0%	5.52
France	4.75%	4.88	5.50%	5.52	EUAT	6.0%	5.05

### Money Market Rates

Overnight	1 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
Banking CDs	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
Local Authority Depos	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
Discount Market Depos	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
Treasury Bills (Buy)	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
Dollar CDs	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
EUAT	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75

### Tourist Rates

£ Buys	2.0425	France (France)	9.1180	New Zealand (Dollars)	2.2880
Australia (Dollars)	10.8000	Germany (Dollars)	2.7085	Norway (Dollars)	10.8000
Austria (Schillings)	19.0000	Greece (Dollars)	450.0000	Portugal (Escudos)	270.0000
Belgium (Francs)	56.9100	Hong Kong (Dollars)	12.2000	Spain (Pesetas)	166.6667
Canada (Dollars)	2.2250	Ireland (Pounds)	1.2225	Sweden (Kronor)	12.2000
Cyprus (Pounds)	0.8005	Italy (Lira)	2704.0000	Switzerland (Francs)	2.1500
Denmark (Kroner)	10.3900	Japan (Yen)	200.0000	Taiwan (Dollars)	4.4420
Holland (Guilder)	3.0335	Malaysia (Ringgit)	0.6000	United States (Dollars)	1.5580
Finland (Markka)	0.2000				

### Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long GB	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short GB	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long US	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short US	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Euro	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Euro	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Japan	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Japan	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Australia	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Australia	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Canada	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Canada	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Hong Kong	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Hong Kong	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long India	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short India	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Korea	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Korea	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Taiwan	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Taiwan	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Thailand	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Thailand	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Singapore	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Singapore	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12

### Energy

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Oil	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Oil	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Gas	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Gas	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Long Coal	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12
Short Coal	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12

### Commodity Indices

Index	1970-100	1970-100	1970-100	1970-100	1970-100	1970-100	1970-100
Agricultural	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Energy	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Industrial	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Livestock	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Metals	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Softs	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Grains	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Oil	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Gold	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Silver	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Palladium	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Platinum	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Rhodium	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Vanadium	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Uranium	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Zinc	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Copper	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Aluminum	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Lead	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12
Nickel	109.14	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12	109.12



# Punchestown festival finds favour

Racing  
GREG WOOD

Just 13 horses were declared yesterday for the Whitbread Gold Cup at Punchestown on Saturday, which will feature the last big day of the National Hunt season with one of the smallest fields in its 40-year history. But if the executive at Sandown Park is wondering where all the horses have gone, they should look no further than Punchestown, where the three-day Festival meeting, Ireland's equivalent of Cheltenham, opens this afternoon.

David Nicholson and Nick Henderson are among the British trainers with representatives in Ireland today, while many, indeed most, of the country's best chasers and hurdlers will also be appearing this week.

Nicholson has been a keen supporter of the meeting for several years - he was responsible for Billycock Gruff, the only British-trained winner, 12 months ago - and he will again lead the raiding party this afternoon when Midnight Legend, winner of the Seagram Top Novices' Hurdle at the Grand National meeting, attempts to follow up in the Country Pride Champion Novices' Hurdle. Sharpal, runner-up to Mid-

night Legend at Liverpool, will re-oppose this afternoon, while Aidan O'Brien's What's The Verdict, who won a valuable race at Cheltenham last week, is back on home soil and is another who should go close.

The feature event on the opening card is the BMW Handicap Chase, in which Henderson has another serious contender in Big Man. An excellent

Richard Edmondson (NAP: Onefourseven) (Ponfract 4.50) NB: Roblesy Bowl (Ponfract 3.50)

British challenge is completed by Arctic Kinsman (Nigel Twiston-Davies) and Lord Dorset (Alistair Charlton), but all three will need to be at their best to cope with Kiaran Davis, winner of this race last year and a former champion two-miler.

How Sandown would wish such competition on Saturday, traditionally the biggest day of the year at the Esher track. Go Ballistic, the beaten favourite in the Grand National, and Incheilich were among the horses withdrawn from the race, even though the former put in an encouraging piece of work at John O'Shea's yard yesterday morning. "He worked fantastic," the trainer said, "but it is not worth risking him on the

ground and I'd rather put him away when he is on the top of his form."

In Go Ballistic's absence, it is left to Nicholson, surely the week's busiest trainer, to provide almost a third of the five-day declarations for Saturday's race. In addition to the Gold Cup runner-up, Barton Bank, set to carry top weight, the trainer still has Banjo, Call A Day and St Mellion Fairway in the 29-furlong event, while another trainer, Robert Alner, is responsible for three more.

Richard Duwoody, due to partner Incheilich before his withdrawal, may now switch to Gordon Richards's McGregor The Third. "The owners are keen to run and it is a £100,000 race, but I don't like running them from out of the backpark," Richards said. "But he is in good form and his last run [when fifth behind Lord Glynn, the sub-sequence Grand National winner] doesn't look so bad now."

Michael Hills has been given the plum ride on Hidden Meadow in the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket a week on Saturday. Ian Balding has chosen him ahead of Ray Cochrane, the colt, the five-furlong winner of the European Free Handicap under



Kiaran Davis: ready to repel British challenge Photograph: Dan Abraham/Sporting Life

## Search for Hidden rider ends in Hills

Michael Hills has been given the plum ride on Hidden Meadow in the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket a week on Saturday. Ian Balding has chosen him ahead of Ray Cochrane, the colt, the five-furlong winner of the European Free Handicap under

Frankie Dettori last week. Dettori will partner Shamikh for Godolphin in the first Classic. "I discussed it with the owner [George Strawbridge] and the fact that Ray Cochrane had ridden Selkirk for him came into consideration. But Michael won

on Hidden Meadow last year and rode him when he was third in the Morris Hill Stakes. "It is never a bad thing to have previous experience of riding a horse. He behaved beautifully at Newmarket but he can be a bit spooky at home."

### PONFRACT

2.15 Chadwell Hall 4.20 Genuine John 4.50 ONEFOURSEVEN (nap) 5.20 Silent Miracle (nb) 5.30 Billy Bushwacker

GOING: Good to Firm (firm between 1m 7f and 1m).  
SHELLS: 2m 1f - easy; rest - inside. DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.  
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## James dropped

Blunders cost Liverpool keeper his place in England squad, page 26

## sport

## Webb wits

Brentford's manager stung by fans' abuse, page 26



O'Sullivan: 'I was shaking like a leaf. I was in bits'

## O'Sullivan aims to realise maximum potential

## Snooker

GUY HODGSON

As Ronnie O'Sullivan played his first ball in the 14th frame of his match against Mick Price yesterday, he declined to go for a difficult red, thinking: "I'm quite enjoying playing safety at the moment." Five minutes and 20 seconds later he had scored the fastest maximum ever in tournament snooker.

Safety first, devastation second as 36 balls were potted in 320 seconds. It worked out at one every nine seconds and, adding the £147,000 prize

for the 147 clearance to £18,000 for the highest break at the Embassy World Championship, £515 per second of the frame.

It was the fourth maximum at the world championship and the latest in a list of remarkable feats from a 21-year-old who, the six-times world champion Stephen Hendry's remarkable record notwithstanding, is the outstanding personality in snooker. Last year he disgraced himself at the Crucible by assaulting a press officer; this year he has hit the headlines for the right reasons.

"I thought it was on when I got to the second red," O'Sullivan

said after his 10-6 first-round victory over Price. "I was in the balls and all I could think was maxi."

After his one safety shot, O'Sullivan relentlessly potted ball after ball, going out of position only once when he nearly snookered himself on the penultimate red with the pink. Just enough of the ball was showing, however, and once that dropped the rest was a formality.

The pace was astounding, the total time for the break being one minute and 49 seconds faster than the previous best, set by Thailand's James Wattana in the 1992 British Open. "If I had

stopped and thought I'd have probably missed," O'Sullivan said. "I was shaking like a leaf. I was in bits. But I thought: 'If I stop you're just going to break the rhythm.'"

At one point O'Sullivan dropped his chalk, leaving it behind in his hurry to complete the frame. The maximum follows a turbulent season for O'Sullivan, which has included two tournament victories and an outburst at the European Open in Malta last month when he announced he wanted to give up the sport. Typically, he withdrew the comment at the next event, saying:

"People should take with a pinch of salt some of the things I say. It wasn't the first time I said I was going to quit and I don't suppose it will be the last."

It that points to a remarkable young man finding fame hard to handle, then the impression is correct. The world No 8 from Chigwell, Essex, got his first 100 break at 10 and at 17 became the youngest winner of an international professional tournament. This coincided with his father being given a life sentence for murder.

The resultant publicity would have affected the most stable of

personalities and 12 months ago his career appeared to be heading for oblivion. He received a suspended two-year ban and a £20,000 fine after the assault in Sheffield. He then vowed to become a "model professional and an ambassador for the game."

His threat to retire did not accord with that ambition but since then he has taken up running and lost weight. "I'm practising harder now than I have for four or five years," he said yesterday. "I was like that in my amateur days but since I turned pro it nearly did my brain

in Snooker wasn't the most important thing in my life.

"I'm coming to terms with things. I'm 21 and a man now and I have to start acting like a man. I had to get it together. I was out of order last year. I've admitted that. Now it's the real me."

The real Ronnie is not easy to locate, but if O'Sullivan could realise his potential, would be the natural successor to Hendry, whom he is scheduled to meet in the quarter-finals. "I'm here to win the tournament," he said yesterday. "The maximum is history now. It is in all senses of the word."

## Swinburn's career in the balance

## Racing

GREG WOOD

The riding career of Walter Swinburn, which has included a Derby winner and a near-fatal accident in the last two years alone, took a new turn yesterday when the jockey announced his intention to take "a sabbatical from race-riding". The 35-year-old rider said that his decision was the result of a "continuing weight problem", but he added that "it is certainly not on my mind to retire altogether".

In a statement, Swinburn said: "I am taking this step in the long-term interests of my career. I would not be fair to myself or anyone else if I did not give my body or my metabolism a chance to settle down, and it has significantly failed to do that over recent months, in spite of rigid adherence to a medically supervised diet."

Swinburn's announcement prompted complete astonishment throughout racing, not simply because of its substance, but also as a result of its timing. On Saturday week, he had been due to partner the most highly regarded horse of his generation, Entrepreneur, in the 2,000 Guineas, the first Classic of the season. Entrepreneur is already the ante-post favourite for the Derby, an event which Swinburn has won three times, most memorably on Stargard when he was just 19 years old.

Like Stargard, Entrepreneur is trained by Michael Stoute, who stood by Swinburn when many felt he was too young and inexperienced to ride a Derby favourite, and has been his most significant employer ever since. "Naturally I am hugely disappointed to be forced into making this decision," the jockey

added, "particularly when the year appears to hold so much promise for [Michael Stoute's] horses. I wish Mr Stoute and everyone at Freemason's Lodge a hugely successful year and hope that it is not too long before I am once again playing a significant part in the story."

Stoute, too, expressed his regret at yesterday's news. "I have been very aware that life has been a struggle for him recently," the trainer said, "and I look forward to him coming back when the problem is under control, when he will most certainly have my full support."



Swinburn: Weight problems

der control, when he will most certainly have my full support."

Away from the track, Swinburn has not always lived up to his nickname of "the Choirboy", and last month he was fined £500 and ordered to pay £600 in compensation after admitting an assault on a Newmarket restaurateur. During the proceedings, Swinburn admitted to suffering from an eating disorder which reduced his tolerance to alcohol, but when he returned to riding at Nottingham a fortnight later, there was little indication that anything but a full campaign lay before him.

Even by the rollercoaster standards of his profession, Swinburn's career has veered wildly from high to low. Less than two years ago, he won his third Derby on Lammtarra, only to lose the ride on the subsequent King George and Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe winner to Lanfranco Dettori shortly afterwards. Then, the following February, came the moment to which many will feel the rider's latest troubles can trace their origin, when in the space of a few desperate seconds at Sha Tin in Hong Kong, Swinburn was left battered and almost lifeless when his mount crashed through a running-rail at speed.

His protracted recovery from severe head and chest injuries was extended further when the Jockey Club refused to licence him to ride until six months from the date of his accident. As so often in such circumstances, Swinburn's comeback ride, at Windsor on 12 August, was a winner, and when he partnered Pilsudski to victory in the Breeders' Cup Turf, one of the world's most valuable races, in Canada three months later, it looked that his career had caught an upturn once again.

Yet now it seems that while the obvious injuries from Sha Tin had healed, other scars remained. Weight problems can strike a jockey at any moment, and while Swinburn inherited talent in abundance from his father, Wally, himself a leading rider, he has never had the scrawny build of a natural lightweight. It is just three months since Walter Swinburn walked across Ireland to raise £60,000 for charity. His personal journey towards full professional health, by contrast, remains far from complete.

Racing, page 25



Jim Courier, of the United States, plays an unorthodox backhand during his win over Dominik Hrbaty in Monte Carlo yesterday. Photograph: Ray

## Gullit adds Babayaro to his foreign legion

## Football

TOMMY STANFORTH

Ronald Gullit has beaten off competition from Juventus, Internazionale and Deportivo La Coruña to sign the Nigerian international Celestine Babayaro from the Belgian club, Anderlecht, in a £2.25m deal.

Babayaro, who will not be 19 until August, will stay with Anderlecht for the rest of the season and arrive at Stamford Bridge in the summer, after signing a five-year contract with the FA Cup finalists. He will become

the latest member of Gullit's growing number of foreigners at Chelsea, joining (among others) Italy's Gianfranco Zola and Ghanaian Vili, Romania's Dan Petrescu and the Frenchman, Franck Leboucq.

Babayaro, a left wing-back who won an Olympic gold medal for Nigeria in the USA last summer and scored one of their goals in the final, has been with Anderlecht from the age of 15. He has been pursued by Europe's top clubs after many impressive performances over the last two seasons.

However, Gullit's reputation

persuaded him to join Chelsea, whose managing director, Colin Hutchinson, flew to Belgium to complete the deal.

"I told Ronald I wanted to sign for Chelsea after only two conversations on the telephone," Babayaro said. "I am very happy he wants me in his team and I am looking forward to a great season with Chelsea."

Babayaro has never been to London and will need a British work permit to complete his move to Stamford Bridge. He watched Chelsea's FA Cup semi-final win over Wimbledon on television.

## MORSE

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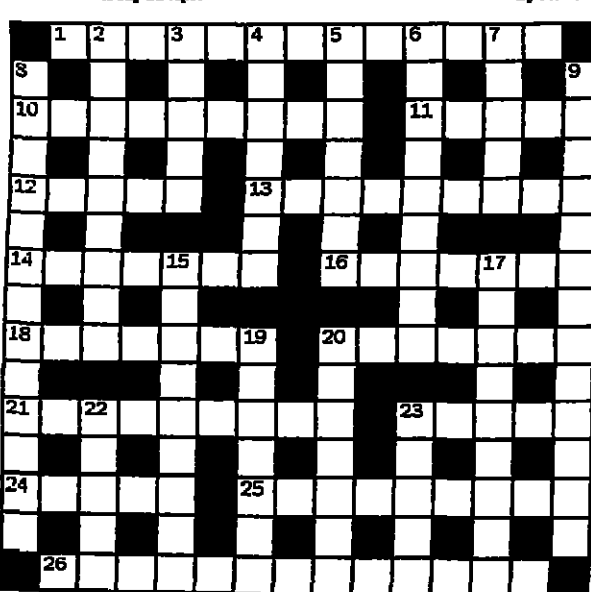
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## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3279 Tuesday 22 April

By Astrid

Monday's Solution



MONDAY'S SOLUTION  
1. U.S. PRESIDENT  
2. REPUBLICAN  
3. A.D.H.A.R.G.  
4. GEORGIAN  
5. NATIVE  
6. E.E.C.  
7. OPAL  
8. LAUGHING  
9. O.L.S.M.S.E.C.  
10. GREENIE  
11. RHEA  
12. T.S.A.  
13. F.I.B.  
14. HOLLER  
15. SUSAN  
16. F.O.R.A.S.E.A.  
17. GIGI  
18. INITIATIVE  
19. N.N.S.S.E.A.  
20. LOUSIGUY  
21. THIRING

## ACROSS

1. Learned hazard of estimation? (8,5)

10. In this your gains can only be ill-gotten (4,5)

11. A live American is crossing the centre of the vessel (5)

12. Confirm losing right to follow (5)

13. Leaked file hits shipping safety? (9)

14. Casual walk leads one into a state of unrest (7)

16. Silvery element; try it out with hesitation (7)

18. Feature of Labour Conference which slowed down old cars (3,4)

20. Robin doubled up as an ornithologist? (7)

21. A Cape trip organised for one (3,6)

23. Agitated man fanciful re-appeared? (5,5)

## DOWN

24. Turn in English pub rejected out of general dissatisfaction (5)

25. Retail drinks outlet ripe for privatisation? (6,3)

26. Cycle shop owner could be a ruthless capitalist (7-6)

2. Father gets church to organise boycott of foreign livestock? (9)

3. Produce young animals, about 50, in grotto (5)

4. It advertises trains in territory (7)

5. Cook ocean fish? (4-3)

6. Banal tour arranged of distant capital (4,5)

7. Swindle included hard case (5)

8. One benefiting from removal (5,8)

## Pop meant, seizing inspiration, to leave car - rides cost here (9,4)

15. Voice-over musical having no difficulty in finding the words (9)

17. Album item to be changed? Being so makes it impossible (9)

19. Walks badly in, for example, climbing to spot (7)

20. Talked of second science room in place of horticulture (7)

22. Organised Switzerland's cattle farm (5)

23. Fort makes one laugh about a poem of Kipling's (5)

The Weekend Editor apologises for the non-appearance of the Easter Jumbo Crossword solutions on Saturday. They will be printed next Saturday.

25 من الأول